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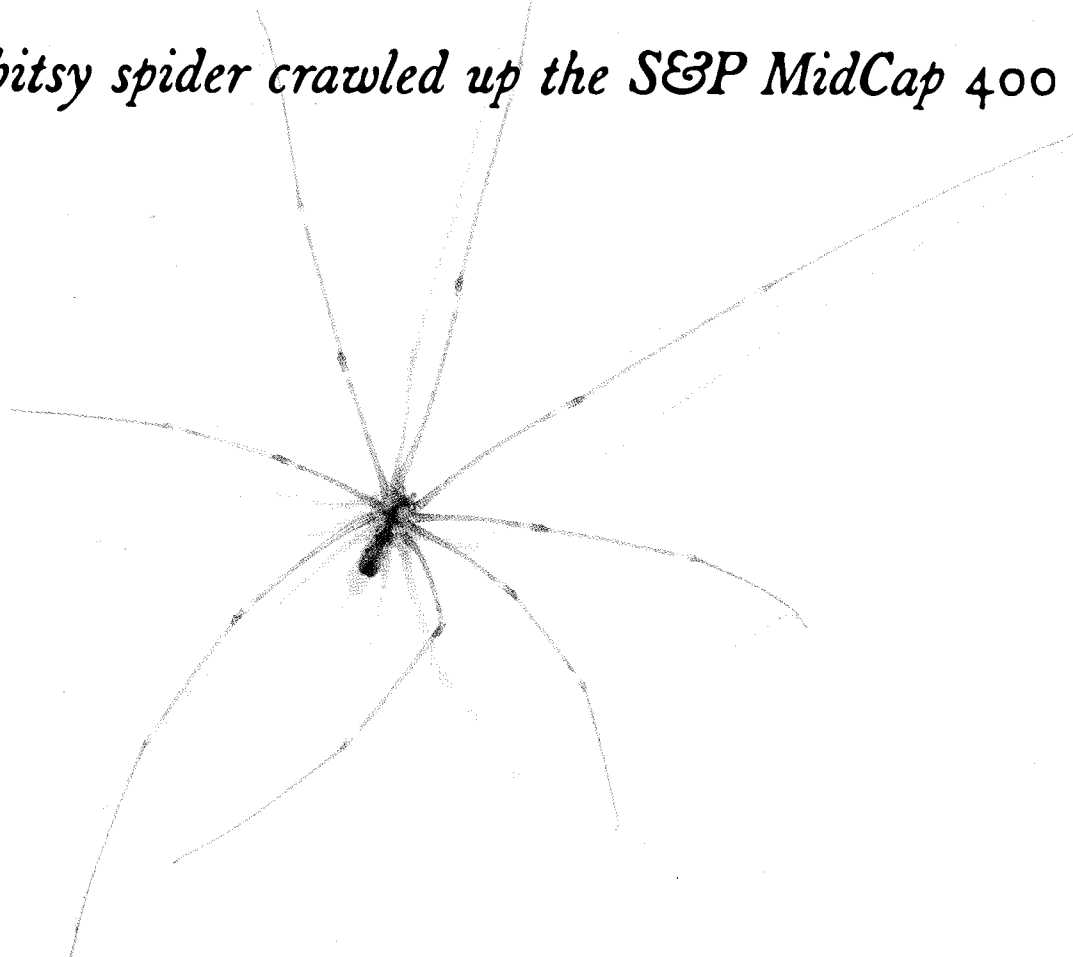
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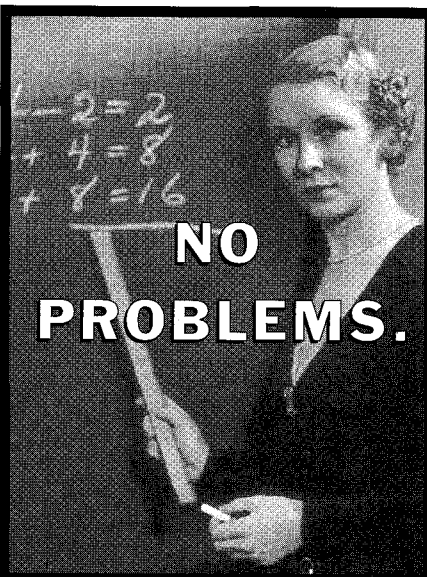
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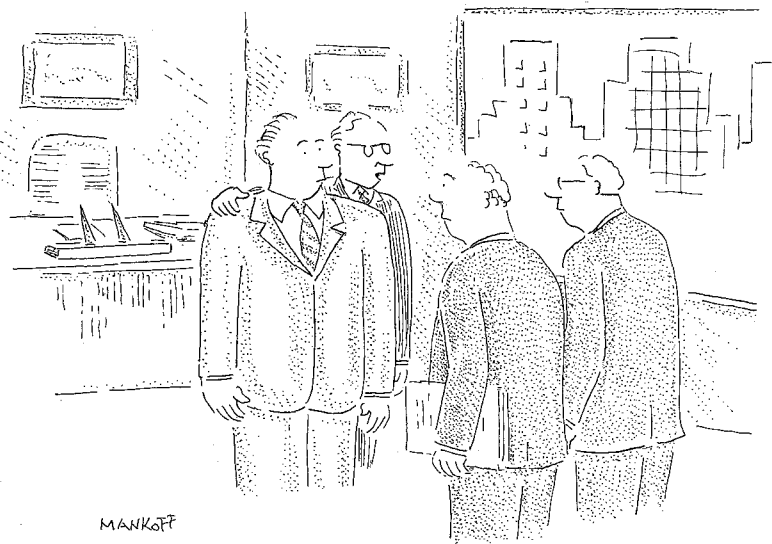
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Philip Schultz (Poem, p. 80) has published four books of poetry, including "The Holy Worm of Praise." ♦



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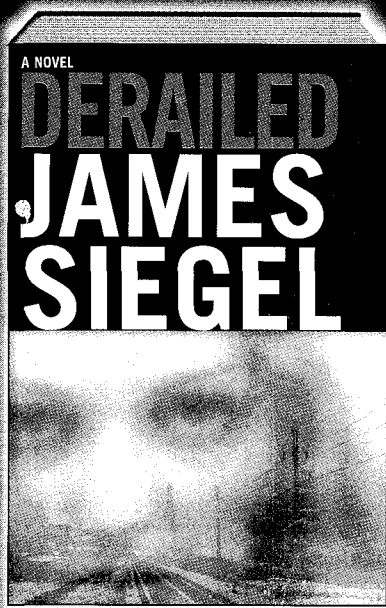
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WHY WAR?

The not so hidden theme of David Remnick's Comment on Iraq is that, with regard to Saddam Hussein, nobody wants to be cast as Neville Chamberlain (*The Talk of the Town*, February 3rd). Fair enough. But, while Hitler marched into a good part of Europe as Chamberlain stood by, Saddam, hobbled by sanctions, is hardly in a position to do much regionally, let alone to America. In the wake of September 11th, the very real enemy of the United States was Al Qaeda. It soon became clear, however, that the battle against this foe would be long, ugly, and tedious, and the Bush Administration has instead sought to pick fights where it could demonstrate that it was a real winner.

Joe Obad
Calgary, Alberta

Remnick writes that Kenneth M. Pollack, in his recent book, *The Threatening Storm*, raises all possible objections to war and fully answers them. But when Pollack, a former C.I.A. analyst, testified before the Senate on May 21, 1998, he had this to say: "I, too, would like to find ways to get rid of Saddam Hussein quickly. But I am forced to accept the logic that containment is the best course of action. . . . Containment is our only reasonable course of action toward Iraq at present." Indeed, the aftermath of war, even with American victory assured, would be far too risky. There have been two significant changes since then. The first is September 11th; the second is the occupant of the White House. What hasn't changed is the reality on the ground.

David Siff
Bronx, N.Y.

EXPERIMENTING ON AFRICA

Michael Specter suggests that I objected to clinical trials in Africa "to find a cheap, effective way to prevent a mother from passing the AIDS virus to her child at birth" because of some misguided insistence on comprehensive medical treatment for all participants. He also implies that I

would oppose vaccine trials there for similar reasons ("The Vaccine," February 3rd). Neither is the case. What I objected to was not the search for a shorter, cheaper regimen of AZT but the decision to test it against placebo instead of against the standard regimen. If the standard regimen had been used as the control, we could have learned that a short course was nearly as effective, without leaving the control infants with no defense at all. The fact that other infants in Africa receive no protection is not an excuse. Ethical studies might have required larger trials, but that is a small price to pay. It is wrong for scientists to exploit the desperate lack of medical care in Africa by conducting research there that they could not get away with at home.

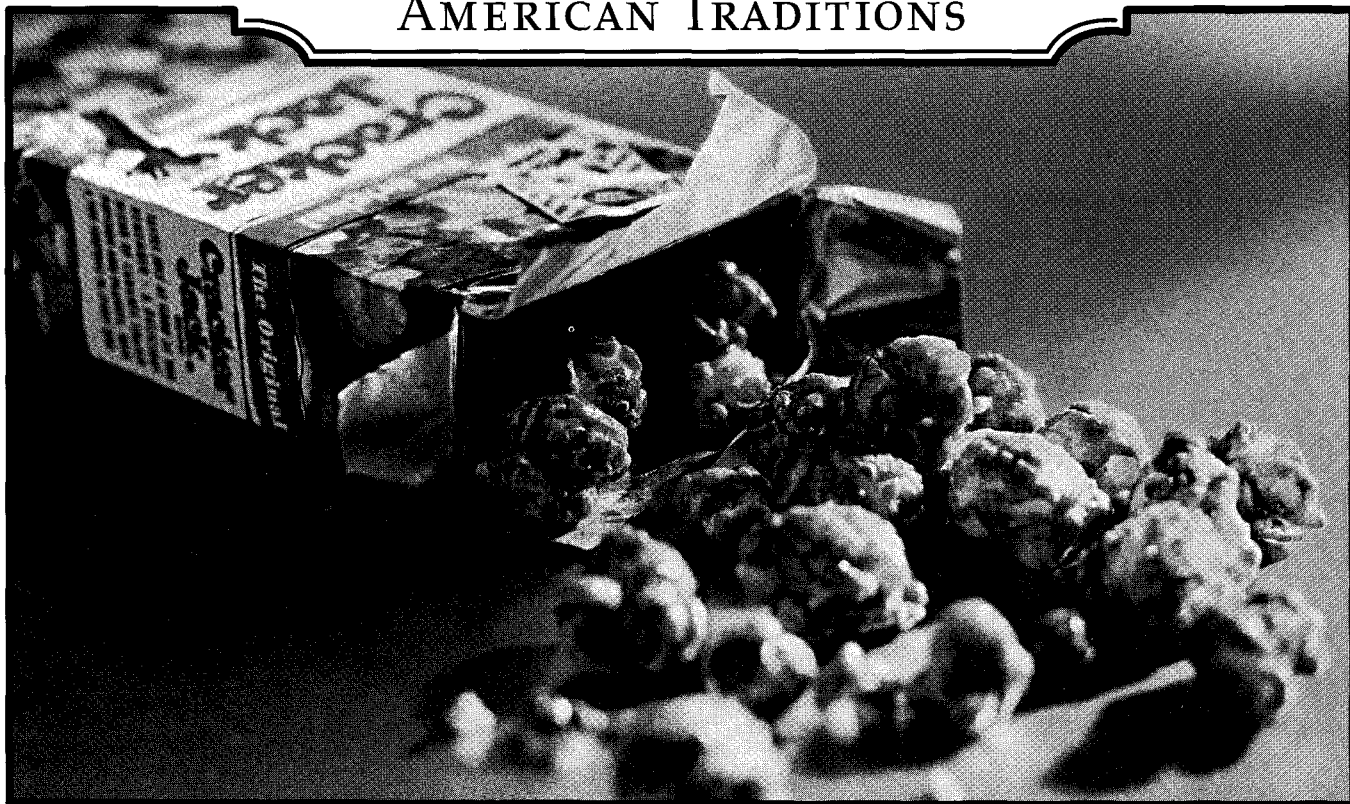
Marcia Angell
Senior Lecturer in Social Medicine
Harvard Medical School
Boston, Mass.

Specter depicts the Ugandan district of Masaka, where research into AIDS is taking place, as a fortunate recipient of Western beneficence: "There are dozens of clinics, and nobody goes hungry." But he might also have looked at Rakai, where in the nineteen-nineties researchers from Columbia and Johns Hopkins and elsewhere monitored, but did not treat, the monogamous, uninfected partners of more than four hundred H.I.V.-positive individuals for two and a half years. Nearly a hundred became infected during the course of the study. The real debate is not, as Specter would have it, about unrealistic demands that study participants "receive the best care on earth." It is about widely varying definitions of what, exactly, it means for Western academics and drug companies to conduct research in a just fashion.

James Recht
Watertown, Mass.

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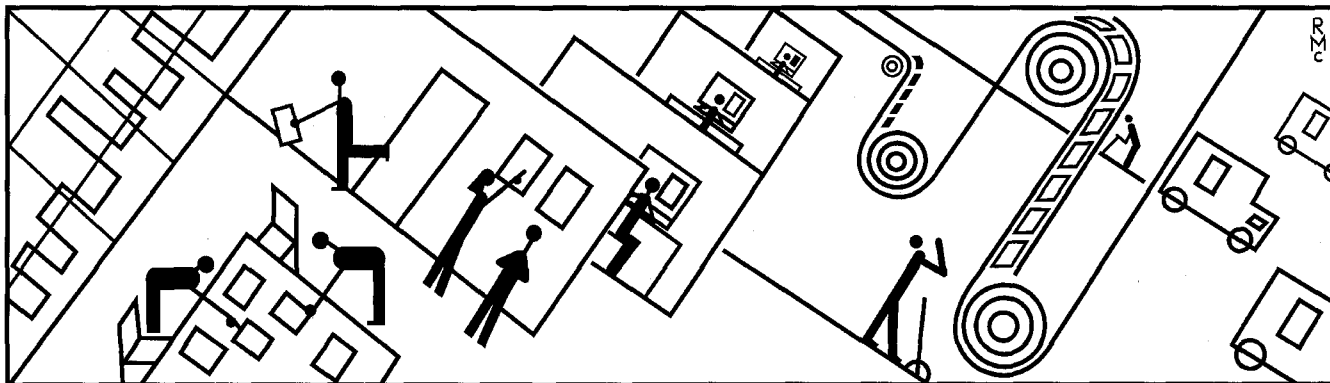
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THE THEATRE OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

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BARBRA'S WEDDING

The actor Daniel Stern ("Diner") presents his first play, a comedy about an unemployed actor who lives next door to Barbra Streisand. John Pankow and Julie White star, and David Warren directs. In previews. Opens March 5 at 7. (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 212-239-6200.)

BEXLEY, OH!

New York Theatre Workshop presents the premiere of a play written and performed by the actress Prudence Wright Holmes, about life in her home town in Ohio during the fifties and sixties. Lisa Peterson directs. In previews. Opens March 10 at 7. (79 E. 4th St. 212-239-6200.)

BUICKS

The Underwood Theatre presents a new play by Julian Sheppard, directed by Brian Kulick, about a Fresno car salesman who goes on an impromptu road trip to Albuquerque in pursuit of his wife after she takes off with their kids. In previews. Opens March 9 at 7. (McGinn/Cazale, Broadway at 76th St. 212-206-1515.)

THE CHINESE ART OF PLACEMENT

In a new comedy by Stanley Rutherford, T. Scott Cunningham plays a neurotic man who seeks salvation through the principles of feng-shui. Directed by Jessica Bauman. In previews. Opens March 7 at 8. (78th Street Theatre Lab, 236 W. 78th St. 212-206-1515.)

FUCKING A

The Public Theatre presents a new work by Suzan-Lori Parks, a reimagining of "The Scarlet Letter" that incorporates ten original songs into a drama about abortion and revenge. Directed by Michael Greif. In previews. (425 Lafayette St. 212-239-6200.)

HEAT LIGHTNING

A new musical by George Griggs (the book was co-written with Paul Andrew Perez) tells the story of a country-rock singer who's obsessed with Elvis, bored by his life and his wife in the suburbs, and looking for trouble. Opens March 5 at 8. (Kirk, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

MY LIFE WITH ALBERTINE

Drawn from Proust's "Remembrance of Things Past," this new musical, directed by Richard Nelson ("Madame Melville," James Joyce's "The Dead"), relates the romance between the young Proust (Chad Kimball) and Albertine (Kelli O'Hara). Book and lyrics by Nelson and music and lyrics by Ricky Ian Gordon. In previews. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

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O JERUSALEM

The Flea Theatre presents a new play by A. R. Gurney about a U.S. State Department official whose career and personal life are complicated by the events of 9/11. Stephen Rowe, Priscilla Shanks, and Rita Wolf lead the cast. Directed by Jim Simpson. In previews. (Flea, 41 White St. 212-226-2407.)

OUR LADY OF 121ST STREET

A group of friends reunite at a funeral home after the death of a nun they all knew, in Stephen Adly Guirgis's play, which comes to Off Broadway after a successful Off-Off run last summer. Directed by Philip Seymour Hoffman. In previews. Opens March 6 at 8. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 212-307-4100.)

POLISH JOKE

Manhattan Theatre Club presents a new comedy by David Ives, starring Nancy Opel, Malcolm Gets, and Larry Drake. John Rando directs. In previews. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

TEA AT FIVE

Kate Mulgrew plays Katharine Hepburn in a drama about the life of the actress, written by Matthew Lombardo and directed by John Tillinger. In previews. Opens March 9 at 5. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 212-239-6200.)

URBAN COWBOY

A musical based on the 1982 film stars Matt Cave-nough and Jenn Colella. Directed by Lonny Price and choreographed by Melinda Roy, with musical direction by Jason Robert Brown. In previews. (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

VINCENT IN BRIXTON

Lincoln Center presents the American premiere of a new play by Nicholas Wright about the time Vincent Van Gogh spent in London in his youth. Jochum ten Haaf plays the artist, and Clare Higgins plays his older lover, an English widow. Richard Eyre directs. In previews. Opens March 6 at 6:45. (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

OPENED RECENTLY

LA BOHÈME

Baz Luhrmann has reset Puccini's opera in a cinematic Paris of 1957—on the eve of Godard's "Breathless"—and his *moto*-ready cast of young studs looks the part. Rodolfo and Marcello wear

leather jackets and boots, Mimi sports a trench coat, and the red-hot Musetta (Jessica Comeau) has hipster slacks and an Ann-Margret kittenishness. For Musetta's splendid "Quando me'n vo," the ensemble gathers on a silverized Parisian street that looks like a black-and-white Doisneau shot come to life. Rodolfo (David Miller) and Mimi (Ekaterina Solov'yeva) have terrific voices, and they're both eye candy: he's a young Belmondo to her Eva Marie Saint. When this Rodolfo first lays eyes on this Mimi, enough heat jumps between the two of them to melt the snowflakes. It makes you want to hop a plane to Paris—the Paris in Baz Luhrmann's mind. Note: Three rotating casts perform the lead roles. (Broadway, Broadway at 53rd St. 212-239-6200.)

BRACE UP! (2003)

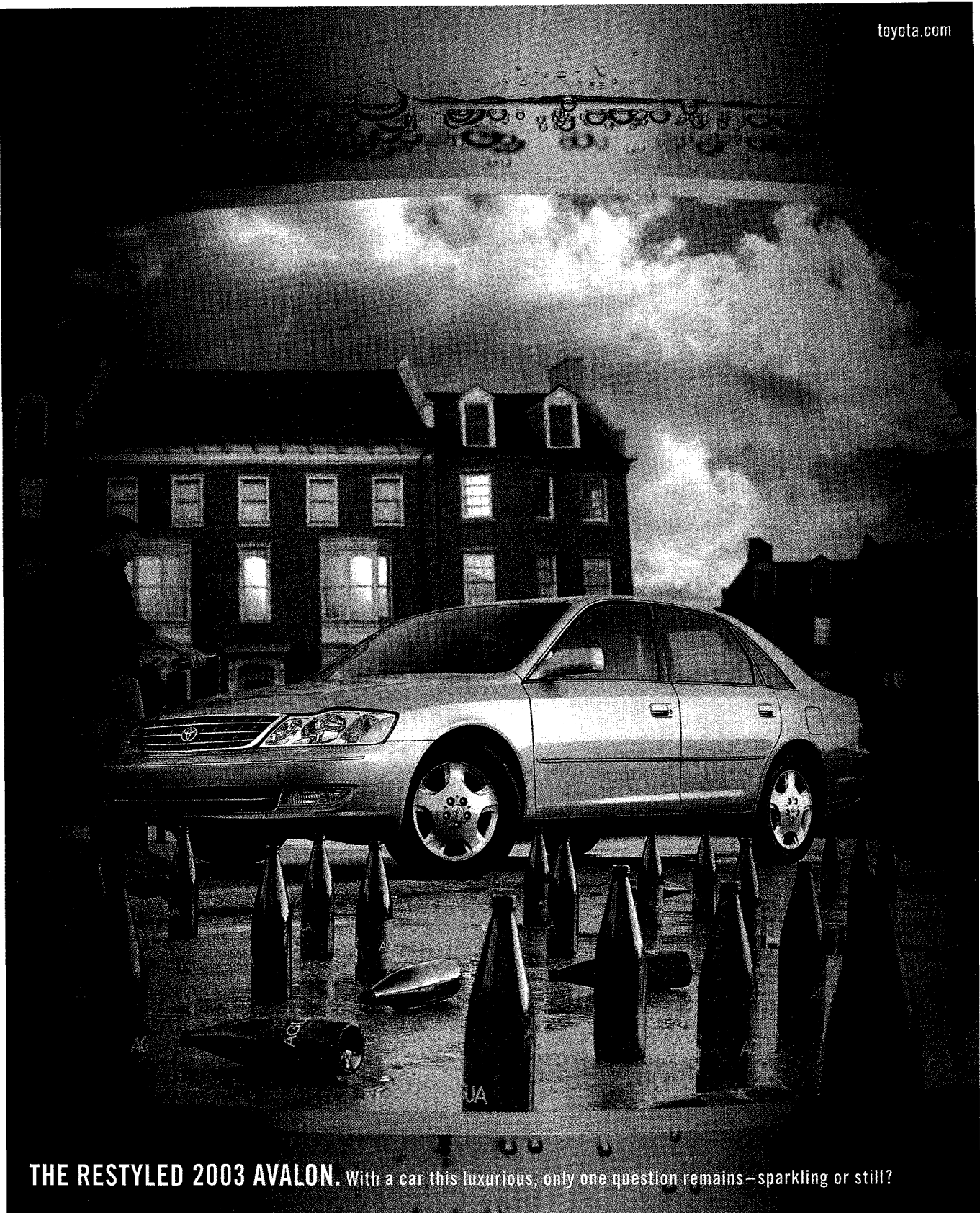
The Wooster Group presents a new production of its esteemed 1991 adaptation of Chekhov's "Three Sisters." Reviewed in this issue. (St. Ann's Warehouse, 38 Water St., Brooklyn. 718-858-2424.)

DUBLIN CAROL

In an office on Christmas Eve in modern Dublin, three characters confront each other around the wan colored lights of a small Christmas tree in Conor McPherson's nearly plotless, beautifully written play. John (Jim Norton) is a fifty-year-old undertaker who has little respect for the dead and whose rages and self-pity have alienated him from family and friends. As Mark, his young, boastful, somewhat lost protégé, Keith Nobbs is appropriately understated—a resilient willow withstanding the blasts of a blowhard. When John is forced to face his past in the form of his estranged daughter, Mary (Kerry O'Malley), you can see her try to hide her disgust with a fantasy she had probably held on to for most of her life: that once she had a strong and loving da. Directed by the playwright. (Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 212-239-6200.)

FAR AND WIDE

On a set (by Vicki R. Davis) that evokes the mood of "The Garden of the Finzi-Continis"—a villa in Europe, a tennis court, V-neck sweaters, and sexual misery—the actors let their hearts go out to play and receive them back badly bruised. Arthur Schnitzler wrote his play for grownups: betrayal lurks under the façade of civility, nobody is disinterestedly glad to see anybody else, and the audience's sympathies change as circumstances reveal unsuspected depths—and shallows. Lee Bryant brings a gracious strickenness to the role of the proud divorcée Anna Meinhold-Aigner; and Lisa Bostnar, as Genia Hofreiter, progresses from the miserable but faithful wife of a vain, faithless egotist (Hans Tester) to the miserable but unfaithful wife of a vain, faithless egotist. "I can't get my bearings anymore," she tells her husband's latest conquest, Erna (the lovely Victoria Mack). "Life has become so much more trivial these days. When I was your age, certain things were still



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looked upon as terribly serious." Astutely adapted and directed by the Mint Theatre Company's artistic director, Jonathan Bank. (311 W. 43rd St. 212-315-0231. Closes March 9.)

LA FIESTA DEL CHIYO (THE FEAST OF THE GOAT)

The Repertorio Español presents the première of the staged version of Mario Vargas Llosa's prize-winning novel "The Feast of the Goat," based on the life of the Dominican despot General Rafael Leónidas Trujillo. Vargas Llosa has commended the production, which was adapted by Jorge Alí Triana and his daughter Veronica and is directed by Mr. Triana. In Spanish, with simultaneous-translation headsets available in English. (Gramercy Arts Theatre, 138 E. 27th St. 212-889-2850.)

FIFTH OF JULY

Rarely has dialogue flown as surely as it does in this 1978 play, the first in Lanford Wilson's trilogy about the unconventional Talleys of conventional Lebanon, Missouri. After twenty-five years, the idea that cobbled-together families are as good as nuclear ones is no longer new, but Wilson got there first. Robert Sean Leonard is convincing as Kenny Talley, paralyzed in the Vietnam War, whose terror of his future is more moving than his inability to walk, and Parker Posey gives a breakthrough performance as Gwen, the woman married to the hunk John Lan-

cial insight. Gus Kaikkonen's clearheaded direction jibes with the peerless timing of a talented cast led by George Morfogen (Captain Shotover) and Rachel Botchan (Ellie Dunn) to create a strong revival of a timely play. (Pearl, 80 St. Marks Pl. 212-598-9802.)

THE HIGH PRIEST OF CALIFORNIA

Charles Willeford was a novelist in the Raymond Chandler tradition; in this, his only play—presented by the 29th Street Rep—he gives an engrossing depiction of sexual manipulation. Willeford is particularly skilled at presenting deceit as blunt honesty, and the reverse, as he unfolds his classic noir tale of an unhappily married woman and the man she picks up one night. As the struggling couple, David Morgentale and Carol Sirugo both turn in powerful performances. Directed, with a fine respect for telling silences, by Leo Farley. (212 W. 29th St. 212-206-1515.)

HOLD PLEASE

Laura Esterman leads an all-female cast in a new office comedy by Annie Weisman. Directed by Connie Grappo. (Blue Heron Arts Center, 123 E. 24th St. 212-206-1515.)

I WANT YOU TO

In a new play from Paradise Theatre ("Peter and Vandy"), Monique Vukovic plays a colleague of a young filmmaker (Ken Forman) who invites her to a private audition. Written and directed by Eric Maierson. (64 E. 4th St. 212-206-1515.)



Parker Posey (in chair), David Harbour (in floral shirt), and Ebon Moss-Bachrach (with guitar), in Lanford Wilson's "Fifth of July," at Peter Norton Space.

dis (well played by David Harbour), whom Kenny and his sister, June, lusted after at Berkeley. Posey's Gwen is vital, mischievous, and surprising—a generous narcissist. The cast members work superbly together, fired by Jo Bonney's direction and Wilson's dynamic script. (Peter Norton Space, 555 W. 42nd St. 212-244-7529.)

FLOWER DRUM SONG

Part fashion show, part night-club act, part hymn to Asian-American diversity, David Henry Hwang's update of the 1958 Rodgers and Hammerstein show, set in San Francisco's Chinatown, works far better than the original. Directed and choreographed by Robert Longbottom. (Reviewed in our issue of 11/4/02.) (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 212-239-6200. Closes March 16.)

HEARTBREAK HOUSE

George Bernard Shaw's 1917 play, written during the First World War, addresses the losses the war would bring—from a dearth of eligible suitors for England's women to the waning of the British Empire. Though typically Shavian in its preachiness, the play is also typical in its mixture of wit, offhand charm, and so-

KIMBERLY AKIMBO

David Lindsay-Abaire's new comedy, which incorporates sitcom conventions with disease-movie-of-the-week melodrama, chronicles the misadventures of Kimberly, a teen-ager who suffers from a rare aging disorder that makes her look much older than her years. (She is played by Marylouise Burke, who is sixty-two.) In Lindsay-Abaire's topsy-turvy world, which owes a bit to Ionesco and Durang, Kimberly is an old soul, and the wacky grownups around her are hopelessly immature. Though the play doesn't offer much in the way of narrative propulsion, David Petrarca's fast-paced direction keeps it galloping along, Robert Brill's candy-colored sets add cheer, and Burke's wide-eyed performance is endearing and surprisingly believable. (Manhattan Theatre Club, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

LITTLE EGYPT

Three pink-uniformed waitresses dish out pancakes and attitude at a Cairo, Illinois, IHOP in Lynn Siefert's new comedy. Karin Bowersock directs. (Producer's Club 2, at 616 Ninth Ave. 212-206-1515. Closes March 16.)

LITTLE FISH

This new play, choreographed and directed by Graciela Daniele, takes the form of a musical therapy session with a Manhattan woman (Jennifer Laura Thompson) whose chief problem is that she has no interesting problems. The cast, notably Lea Delaria, gamely tries to enliven the wan narrative, based on stories by Deborah Eisenberg, but "Little Fish" is small fry indeed. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St., west of Eighth Ave. 212-246-4422. Closes March 9.)

MA RAINEY'S BLACK BOTTOM

Set in 1927 at a white-owned record company, August Wilson's exquisite play has none of the quaintness of the usual dramatic depictions of black life; instead, it puts African-American behavior into both a socioeconomic and a spiritual context. On David Gallo's cunning set in the revival at the Royale, the white bosses sit in an unreachable, glass-pannelled control room above the stage. Below, in the crepuscular gloom of a dilapidated office, the musicians banter and kid each other as they wait for the arrival of their meal ticket—the Delta blues singer Ma Rainey, played with sure swagger by Whoopi Goldberg. Wilson's play is itself a blues song, and, under Marion McClinton's deft direction, it does onstage what Rainey says her songs do: it understands life; it takes an empty world and fills it up with something. (2/17 & 24/03) (242 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

OBSERVE THE SONS OF ULSTER

MARCHING TOWARDS THE SOMME

On a beautiful set, built by Alexander Dodge and lit by Donald Holde, a platoon of Irish Protestant volunteers struggle with their pride, their fear, and their duty on the eve of one of the bloodiest battles of the First World War. Aided by tricks of the light, their barracks becomes, alternately, a battle escarpment, a Celtic monument, and a church, the scenes intermingling in an eerie overlay that recalls Stoppard's "Arcadia." In a fine and versatile ensemble, well equipped to carry off Frank McGuinness's charged dialogues, Justin Theroux emerges as a major force. Playing the lone toff in the bunch, and the lone survivor, he displays astonishing breadth of character. Directed by Nicholas Martin. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200.)

RADIANT BABY

George C. Wolfe directs a new musical about the nineteen-eighties urban artist Keith Haring, with a book by Stuart Ross; music by Debra Barsha; lyrics by Ira Gasman, Stuart Ross, and Debra Barsha; and a set by Riccardo Hernández. The choreography is by Fatima Robinson, who is known for her work in Gap commercials and music videos for Michael Jackson, Mary J. Blige, the Backstreet Boys, and others. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-239-6200. Closes March 23.)

A RITUAL OF FAITH

Brad Levinson's play is based on the story of a six-year-old Jewish Italian boy who was abducted by Catholics in the mid-nineteenth century and raised by Pope Pius IX. (Lion, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

RUSSELL SIMMONS'

DEF POETRY JAM ON BROADWAY

The hip-hop legend has brought together spoken-word stylists from his HBO show and from the national poetry-slam circuit to create an exuberant, defiant production. The rap bards deliver poems that are part autobiography, part social commentary—addressing everything from love, America, racism, and terrorism to Krispy Kreme doughnuts. (Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.)

SCATTERGOOD

Brian Murray brings considerable charm to the title role in Anto Howard's play about a professor of medieval English literature at Dublin's Trinity College. Scattergood, whose pedagogical concentration is chivalric honor and courtly love, takes an extracurricular interest in a budding romance between two of his students, the brilliant but pathologically awkward Brendan Hillard (T. R. Knight) and the openly self-assured Miss Regan (Tari Signor). The teacher's tutoring of the young man begins comically, but painful truths are eventually forced out into the open. Directed by Doug Hughes. (Beckett, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200. Closes March 22.)

BARBEL SCHWIDT

**THE POWER AND THE POP**

The British group Supergrass, which just released its fourth album, *"Life on Other Planets"* (Island), has been something of a puzzle since its second record, *"In It for the Money,"* in 1997. Every bit the equal of the band's superb debut, *"I Should Coco,"* *"In It for the Money"* raised the possibility that Supergrass was too versatile and prolific for its own good: early versions of the CD came with a second disk of B-sides and outtakes that moved effortlessly from adrenalized punk-pop workouts to Kinks-style miniatures to psychedelic jams. It was clear that Supergrass had talent to burn, but did they have any focus? The band's third effort, eponymously titled and released in 2000, solved nothing: it was diffuse to the point of frustration. *"Life on Other Planets"* moves halfway toward an answer. It's dominated by the kind of sub-three-minute pop songs, heavily indebted to seventies rock, that Supergrass has perfected: *"Za,"* *"Rush Hour Soul,"* *"Grace,"* and the blink-and-it's-over *"Never Done Nothing Like That Before"* achieve the difficult task of sounding effortless. But the album closes with a pair of meandering if pretty ballads that leave the wrong aftertaste: the band's strength is raw energy, not ambience.

For all its critical acclaim, Supergrass hasn't quite broken through here in America; in England and the rest of Europe, though, they're stars. The same fate may befall the Shazam, a power-pop trio from Nashville that conjures up buoyantly tuneful rock and roll. While British stars like Paul Weller and the Gallagher brothers have campaigned for the Shazam, its progress has been sluggish Stateside. *"Tomorrow the World"* (Not Lame), the band's fourth album, may change that. Messy, smart, and always fun, the album chambers and fires twelve songs in under forty minutes, and the last one (*"Nine Times"*) is as good as the first, a ready-for-radio masterpiece with the peerlessly stupid title of *"Rockin' and Rollin' (with My) Rock 'n' Roll Rock 'n' Roller."* The surging chords may belong to the Who, the sensitive-but-tough lead vocals to Cheap Trick, and the harmonies to a thousand Beatles acolytes, but the Shazam has a power all its own.

—Ben Greenman

SHANGHAI MOON

In Charles Busch's swanning romp through thirties film conceits, set in Shanghai in 1931, Busch is Lady Sylvia Allington, a red-headed American temptress whose satin curves and breathy accent (somewhere in between Cary Grant's and Joan Greenwood's) captivate both her credulous, constipated husband, Lord Allington—memorably rendered by Daniel Gerroll, who later doubles as an opium-smuggling pirate—and General Gong Fei, played by B. D. Wong, who makes his entrance in elaborate military dress, cracking a bullwhip. Directed by Carl Andress. (Greenwich House, 27 Barrow St. 212-633-9632.)

SHOWTUNE

A theatrical revue celebrates the music and lyrics of Jerry Herman (*"Mame,"* *"Hello, Dolly!,"* *"La Cage aux Folles"*). Directed by Joey McKneely and performed by a cast of seven. (St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 212-239-6200.)

STRING FEVER

Cynthia Nixon and Evan Handler star in an Ensemble Studio Theatre production of a new play by Jacquelyn Reingold that addresses the topics of single motherhood, fertility, and string theory. Directed by Mary B. Robinson. (549 W. 52nd St. 212-206-1515.)

TAKE ME OUT

Richard Greenberg's popular play, directed by Joe Mantello, has reopened at the Walter Kerr. (219 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.)

DANCE

PAUL TAYLOR DANCE COMPANY

In the central duet of Paul Taylor's new *"Promethean Fire,"* Lisa Viola dives backward through the air. In the long moment before Michael Trusnovec catches her, you can't help but hold your breath. Throughout the rest of the piece, set to orchestrations of Bach fugues and preludes, Taylor provokes similar accesses of disbelief. Sixteen dancers in black velvet weave complex patterns that suggest flocks of birds or herds of antelope. The ensemble starts in a horizontal pyramid formation, collapses in a heap, and emerges in another pyramid, this one majestically vertical. The City Center season features three alternating programs of repertory, including *"Black Tuesday,"* a dance that contrasts the dark reality of the Depression with the Hollywood glitz of the era, and *"Dream Girls,"* a premiere set to the music of the Buffalo Bills barbershop quartet. (131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212. March 4 at 7:30, March 5-7 and March 11 at 8, March 8 at 2 and 8, and March 9 at 3 and 7:30. Through March 16.)

JOE GOODE PERFORMANCE GROUP

The San Francisco showman Joe Goode builds his dances around larger-than-life characters who are sympathetic despite their outsized intensity. During its season at the Joyce, his six-member company performs three premieres that blend singing, speech, and dancing with the group's signature brio. In *"What the Body Knows,"* Liz Burritt communicates her emotional overreactions through her supremely expressive face, which is enlarged by video projection. In *"Doris in a Dustbowl,"* the method is reversed and big things are made small, as Goode and Burritt play Rock Hudson and Doris Day in a danced meditation on lost chances that treats film stars like everyday people. (175 Eighth Ave. 212-242-0800. March 4-7 at 8.)

DANCE THEATRE WORKSHOP

The *"Carnival"* series continues with a rotating schedule that includes evenings by Sally Silvers & Dancers, by the choreography team of Vicky Shick and Barbara Kilpatrick, and by Dawn Akeimi Saito, whose *"Blood Cherries"* combines Butoh dance, music, and visual imagery to portray a woman's spiritual journey toward understanding her ancestry and her identity. (219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. March 6-7 at 7. Through March 16. Call the box office for the full *"Carnival"* schedule.)

DAVID DORFMAN DANCE

In *"See Level,"* David Dorfman plays with the resemblance between bordering nations and bordering bodies. Chris Peck's electronic score creates a sense of emergency, but Samuel Topiary's video display offsets the panic with tranquil images of crashing waves, falling snow, and easily confused closeups of skin and landscape. Dorfman and his four powerful dancers, climbing upon each other, seem to disregard the boundaries between themselves. When a woman asks a man to dance as he imagines she would, then to dance as she could not, the proposition is both farcical and philosophical. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 212-255-5793. March 5-8 at 8.)

FEAST

Julia Mandle, the director of J Mandle Performance, likes to set her work in unusual spaces. For *"Feast,"* the group's new hybrid dance performance and gallery installation, co-presented with Danspace Project's *"Out of Space"* series, she chose a cavernous, five-thousand-square-foot former stable on the Brooklyn waterfront. Nested within the stable is an enormous windowed structure through which the audience can watch four dancers, dressed in exaggeratedly geometric costumes, enacting scenes inspired by Plato's *"Symposium."* Like those dialogues, *"Feast"* explores the philosophical nature of desire, but it also concentrates on physical needs. The company, gathered around a tabletop, takes part in a slow-motion, stylized banquet, choreographed by Beppie Blankert, in which the dancers themselves are the table's legs; hollows cut in the tabletop make room for them. They raise the table, then upend it and wiggle their feet through its hollows. Observers may enter the space every half hour over a three-hour period and



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wander at will, watching the spectacle or seeking conversation and refreshment in the second-floor lounge, up where the horses used to feed. (The Stable, 16 Main St., Dumbo, Brooklyn. 718-246-7440. March 6-7 from 7 to 10 and March 8-9 from 4 to 7. Through April 6.)

KIM ITOH + THE GLORIOUS FUTURE

As a radio plays, a liquid-jointed young man wearing a black eye patch switches from one intense activity to another, his movements seemingly unconnected to the sounds coming from the speakers. The work, a solo improvisation called "Dancing to the Radio," is saved from randomness by the enigmatic bravura of the inventive Japanese dancer Kim Itoh, who weaves ballet, Butoh, and theatre into his work, blending cuteness and cynicism and discarding traditional forms. Itoh performs his radio solo at the Japan Society this week, along with "F.T." danced by four women from his company, about three adolescent girls whose world is invaded by an alien insect. Music by Purcell, Haydn, Handel, and Rossini accompanies the insect invasion. (333 E. 47th St. 212-752-3015. March 7-8 at 8.)

"STRAVINSKY CARNIVAL"

The Construction Company presents an evening of dance set to the music of Stravinsky, choreographed by Christopher Caines, Ariane Anthony, Carolyn Lord, Jeffrey Bauer, and Scott Caywood. The program includes "Petrushka," "The Rite of Spring," "Agon," "The Soldier's Tale," and "Suite Italienne." The chamber ensemble is headed by the violinist Theresa Salomon, with Kathryn Woodard at the piano. (10 E. 18th St. 212-924-7882. March 9-10 at 8.)

"HOMAGE TO SHIKO MUNAKATA"

The Saeko Ichinohe Dance Company celebrates the Japanese woodblock-print artist Munakata on the hundredth anniversary of his birth. Ichinohe and her six dancers create seven pieces that evoke his paintings and woodcuts, illustrating scenes from Japanese folklore and from Munakata's life. One of them, the solo "Sennkyu-Bosatsu no Saku," shows the artist's grief upon the murder of a young girl in his home town of Aomori; the soloist, Yukie Okuyama, portrays both the mourning Munakata in his studio and the goddess of mercy depicted in the woodcut he made in memory of the girl. (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 212-772-4448. March 5-6 at 8.)

NIGHT LIFE CONCERTS

"AMERICAN SONGBOOK"

The vocalist Mary Cleere Haran sings, relates historical anecdotes, tells jokes, and, when the mood strikes her, dances with the kind of finesse that other cabaret performers can only envy. The Winter Garden may not be the kind of intimate space she's used to working, but Haran will have no trouble warming up the room. (World Financial Center, Battery Park. 212-945-0505. March 5 at 6:30.)

AUDIOSLAVE

Musicians from two of the biggest bands in nineties alternative metal make this ensemble a bona-fide supergroup, despite earnest claims to the contrary. Two years or so ago the ex-Soundgarden vocalist and grunge deity Chris Cornell got involved with the rap-rock outfit Rage Against the Machine (minus the original front man, Zack de la Rocha). The foursome ditched the Rage name, the insurgent political agenda, and the hip-hop flirtation and instead went straight to the heart of riff-heavy rock. (Hammerstein Ballroom, Manhattan Center, 311 W. 34th St. 212-307-7171. March 6 at 7:30.)

"HIGHLIGHTS IN JAZZ"

The drummer Louie Bellson, a living link to the big-band era, is still pounding hard on those double bass drums, proving, as any former Ellingtonian must, that it don't mean a thing if it ain't got that swing. Fellow-drummer Kenny Washington, the pianist Derek Smith, and another irrepressible spirit, the onetime Ellington bandmate and brassman Clark Terry, pay tribute to Bellson here. (Pace Downtown Theatre, Spruce St. between Nassau and Gold Sts. 212-346-1715. March 6 at 8.)

TORI AMOS

Despite a career fuelled by willful eccentricity, this flame-haired chanteuse has, over the course of seven albums, become a singer-songwriter of note. She's also spawned a virtual cult of supporters, who swoon over her unconventional piano playing and heartfelt convictions. (Radio City Music Hall, Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 212-247-4777. March 6-8 at 8.)

BIG LAZY

The elegantly gritty instrumental trio led by the guitarist Stephen Ulrich evokes everything from truckers' romps to the haunting film scores of Bernard Herrmann. (Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St. 212-570-3676. March 7 at 7.)

THEY MIGHT BE GIANTS

Everyone's favorite quirk rockers present a children's show, featuring songs from their album "No!" (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 212-840-2824. March 8 at 3.)

TABLES FOR TWO



DRK

114 Dyckman St. (212-304-1717)—"During the week we get a lot of Americans," the waiter said. It isn't often that you're considered a foreign national seven miles from home, but such is the Dominican dominion over Dyckman Street and the distance from midtown to Inwood. On a recent Wednesday night, this slick new pan-Latin restaurant was quiet—there weren't many Americans, Dominicans, Dutch, or anyone else for that matter. The waiter, though, was full of assurances that on weekends the place is *encendido*, especially in the night club upstairs, a gleaming lounge of marble and glass that suggests high times and horrible acoustics. The chef, Ricardo Cardona (who learned some of his tricks with the Nuevo Latino pioneers Douglas Rodriguez and Alex Garcia), emerged from the kitchen to report that the Sunday crowd usually kills off his entire supply of Cristal champagne and Johnny Walker Blue (at \$400 a bottle). After midnight he serves various *asopados*, big soups that hold off hangovers.

A couple of evenings later, on a Friday, the dining room at DRK—the restaurant recently changed its name from RepubliK, after the owners of Republic, a Union Square noodle house, threatened legal action—began filling up after nine: girls' night-outers, a few hot dates, one zesty posse of fat dudes in track suits, and two lone diners (a sullen young woman in arm-length black lace gloves and, a few tables away, a man wearing a string of Mardi Gras beads over a dark suit). The overhead lighting was coercive, fading at random intervals from South Beach pink to Santo Domingo blue, and it seemed to call for touristy cocktails—Dominican mojitos, spicy margaritas, guana-Patróns—and order-more-than-you-can-handle eating. Along came an army of appetizers: *arepas* with braised short ribs, coconut-crusted shrimp with a mango-ginger sauce, Martini glasses brimming with ceviche, and, for the romantics in the house, *pinchos en fuego*, which are skewers of meat you heat up yourself over a sputtering Sterno flame.

Among "*los clásicos de Washington Heights*" is a rich, chunky, tomato-based Dominican seafood soup, another drinker's palliative. Other excellent entrées are the grilled skirt steak, wrapped around a mound of mashed *yautia* (taro root) and served with three *chimichurri* sauces, and a tender roast pork shank the size of a carburetor, with an onion-and-garlic *mojo*. The waiter nominated *mar y tierra parrillada para dos*, which sounds exotic but is in fact just surf and turf—heaps and heaps of grilled meat and seafood. No great shakes, but safe, perhaps, for Americans. (Open daily for dinner. Entrées \$14-\$34.)

—Nick Paumgarten

ROY CARRIER AND THE NIGHT ROCKERS

Lawtell, a little town in the southwestern corner of Louisiana, midway between Opelousas and Eunice, is the home of Roy Carrier's zydeco night club, the Offshore Lounge. Roy and his band are seasoned entertainers who will have no trouble spreading the dancing spirit up north. (La Belle Époque, 827 Broadway, at 13th St. For more information, call 212-685-7597. March 9 at 7:30.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

BOWERY BALLROOM

6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—March 6: The pop-radio people haven't found a spot in the rotation for the singer-songwriter Martin Sexton, but in a perfect world they would, and soon. Sexton's complex songs come complete with basement blues harmony, gospel revelation, polka chords, and the occasional psychedelic guitar lick. Last year, Sexton logged some hundred thousand miles on the road playing stripped-down shows to fans who want what radio won't give them. March 7: The PJ Harvey collaborator and indie-rock session man John Parish, backed by friends from Portishead and Harvey's band. March 10: The young men in the N.Y.C. foursome Mooney Suzuki pump out a driving, fuzz- and R. & B.-heavy exuberance, the likes of which hasn't been heard since the British Invasion. With the short and furious garage rock of Denmark's Ravonettes.

IRVING PLAZA

17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—March 6: The Scottish rockers in Idlewild stop by with songs from their latest release, the surprisingly melodic and heartfelt album "The Remote Part." March 7-8: Interpol evokes the eighties' post-punk godhead, Joy Division, in its stark tone and sharp-dressed somberness. With the Ravonettes (see the Bowery Ballroom).

KNITTING FACTORY

74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (212-219-3055)—March 7: Veterans of a bygone age when creative cross-pollination ran rampant in downtown Manhattan, the minimalist funk outfit Liquid Liquid provided a sparse soundtrack for fledgling punks and hip-hoppers alike. The band may not have become a household name, but their simple bass workout "Cavern" became famous in its own way: it is the basis for the hip-hop standard and ironic party anthem "White Lines (Don't Do It)" by Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five. Recalling the days when SoHo was more than an outdoor mall and Tribeca was still an undiscovered country, Liquid Liquid reconvenes for its first show since 1984.

TONIC

107 Norfolk St. (212-358-7503)—March 9: Shelley Hirsch, a true Brooklyn original, drops by for duets with the pianist Anthony Coleman. Hirsch is an inspired vocal improviser who tells crazy, dense stories of her youth in East New York, of being in a department store, or of whatever happens to strike her when she's performing. Singing, laughing, chanting, gargling, or breathing heavily, Hirsch twists and contorts her body to the sounds and stories she's making. Watching her perform is a captivating experience. With Barbez, an ensemble that includes a brilliant theremin player who smokes cigarettes and a full-throated Russian singer who comes across like Joan of Arc with a sense of humor.

VILLAGE UNDERGROUND

130 W. 3rd St. (212-777-7745)—March 8: The guitarist Link Wray decided, all the way back in 1958, to punch a pencil through his amplifier speakers; the result was the landmark instrumental "Rumble," which gave birth to one of rock's enduring staples: the power chord.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL

59 W. 44th St. (212-840-6800)—Through March 8: Peter Cincotti, who was a seven-year-old jazz-piano prodigy when he was discovered by Harry Connick, Jr., is now a nineteen-year-old headliner (and Columbia sophomore) with charm and chops to spare. But vocally, whether in standards like "Miss Brown to You" and "You Stepped Out of a Dream" or in his own pastiches of bygone songs, he's all eagerness without nuance—a swinger in short pants. Dining.

BIRDLAND

315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—March 7-8: Europe has its own big-band tradition, and some of its most innovative jazz ensembles came together during the sixties and seventies. The **George Gruntz Concert Jazz Band**, which has been around for more than thirty years and is led by the Swiss pianist-composer-arranger, has always found room for American guest soloists—the guitarist **John Scofield** takes pride of place at this rare local engagement. Dining.

BLUE NOTE

131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—Through March 9: Latin music may have been one of the few musical genres Miles Davis didn't fully explore, but that hasn't stopped Latin jazzmen from embracing Davis. "Another Kind of Blue: The Latin Side of Miles" features an all-star consortium of exceptional players including **Paquito D'Rivera**, **Conrad Herwig**, and **Brian Lynch**; the pianist **Eddie Palmieri** joins in on March 7-8.

CARLYLE HOTEL

Madison Ave. at 76th St. (212-744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wrap-around murals, and, through March 15, **Rita Coolidge**. By the end of this decade every one of your favorite, or not so favorite, seventies pop sensations will have become a cabaret performer. Coolidge, she of the agreeable voice and deep musical associations with Joe Cocker, Kris Kristofferson, and others, is a case in point. On Mondays the café is home to **Woody Allen and the Eddie Davis New Orleans Jazz Band**. ♦ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, **Loston Harris** is in attendance.

FEINSTEIN'S AT THE REGENCY

540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (212-339-4095)—Through March 15: **Maureen McGovern's** pop indiscretions of the seventies have long been forgotten (or forgiven) as she's made a successful transformation to cabaret fixture.

IRIDIUM

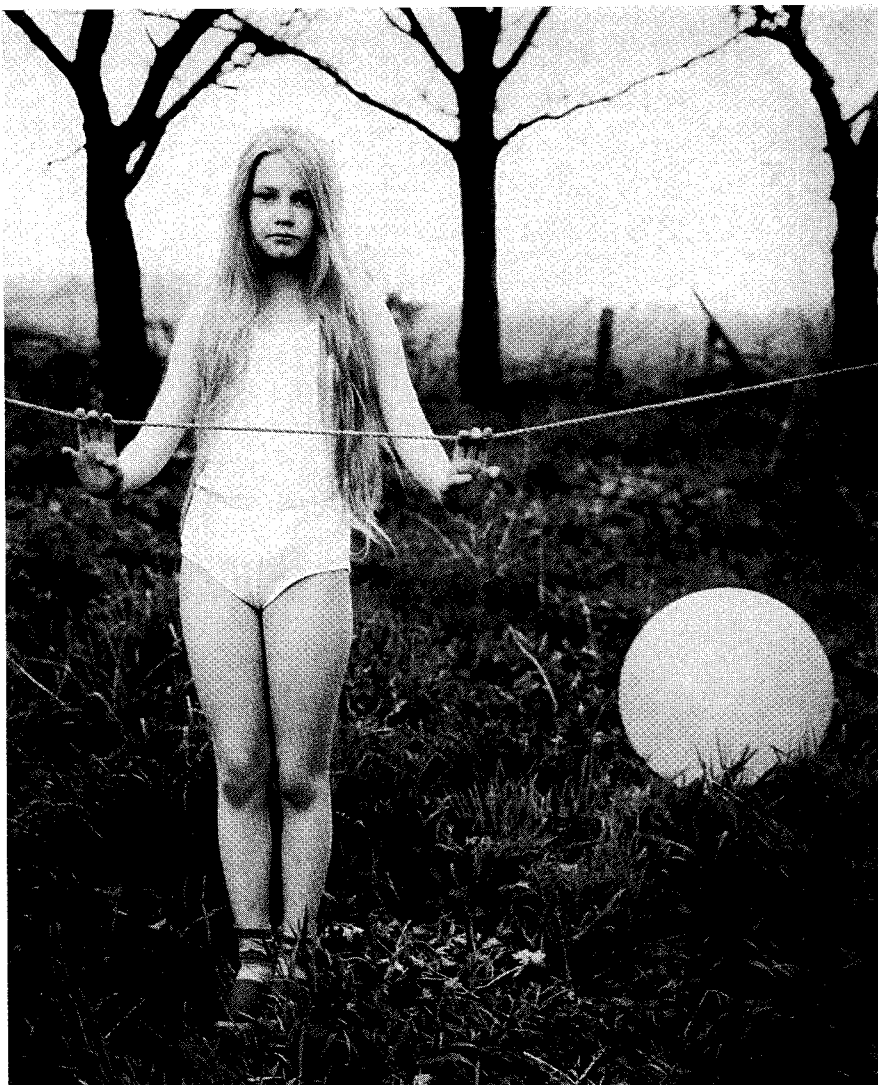
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—Through March 9: The **Ahmad Jamal** trio. Instead of mellowing with time, Jamal gets more eccentric. A charming minimalist in the fifties, the pianist has metamorphosed into a verbose extrovert with his own game plan of stop-and-start rhythms, mood-swinging digressions, and catch-me-if-you-can shenanigans with his sidemen. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul**.

JOE'S PUB

425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—March 6-8: The inveterate hipster **Bob Dorough** joins his occasional collaborator **Dave Frishberg** for three nights of witty songs and equally amusing piano playing. The two have had wide-ranging and unconventional careers: Dorough's covered some ground in his time as a bebopping singer, songwriter, and pianist. Baby-boomer jazz fans know his "Blue Xmas" collaboration with Miles Davis; their children recognize Dorough's "Schoolhouse Rock" and "Sesame Street" ditties. For his part, Frishberg, a fellow "Schoolhouse Rock" vet, writes funny, original songs about baseball, love, and human duplicity. Watch out for "Conjunction Junction."

SMOKE

2751 Broadway, between 105th and 106th Sts. (212-864-6662)—The most persuasive elements of sixties modal bop can still be found in the work of the veteran pianist **Larry Willis**. As in the case of such similarly rejuvenated peers as **Eddie Henderson** and **Gary Bartz**, Willis has retained his original energy while unearthing new depths of meaning in



"Untitled (Sarah)," by Ingar Krauss, at Marvelli (see Photography).

his improvisations. Heard in recent years in Roy Hargrove's band, Willis goes the quintet route here on March 7-8.

VILLAGE VANGUARD

178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Through March 9: The **Kurt Rosenwinkel** quartet. The jury is still out on the guitarist Rosenwinkel. Some hear his fluid lines, limpid tone, and advanced harmonic explorations and get weak in the knees; for others, this young virtuoso is merely serving up fusion under another name. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

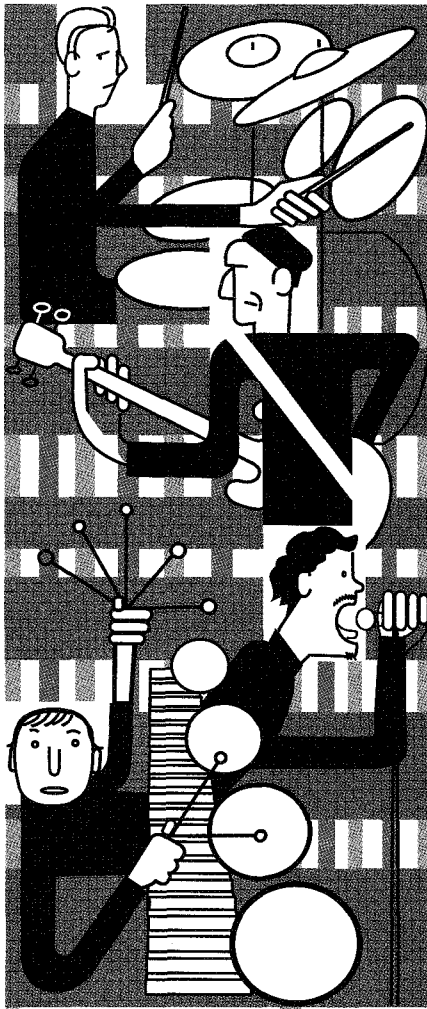
METROPOLITAN MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-879-5500)—With all the modern-art temples in New York, it's surprising that the mid-career retrospective of the German photographer **Thomas Struth** should land in the house of Dendur. On one hand, it's an obvious match: Struth is best known for exquisite large-scale portraits of stately museums thronged with visitors. But the show is an unexpected leap into the twenty-first century for the Met, which has also installed a pair of Struth's video portraits in the Great Hall. The main retrospective intermingles series of vacant city streets, intimate family portraits, lush green jungles, and museum scenes. Hanging in the inevitable retail nook at the end of the show, in what may be a curatorial dig at the recently shuttered Guggenheim branch in Las Vegas, is a stunning image of a pirate's cove at a

casino. The second floor features a smaller exhibition, devoted exclusively to Struth's street photographs. Through May 18. ♦ The staggering riches of "Leonardo da Vinci, Master Draftsman" make it clear that art was an expedient profession for a man of boundless drives. In all fields, he anticipated what unknown things, once they became known, would probably look like. His aesthetic research went straight to ultimate effects of sublime beauty—but strangely, he seemed to have no personal use for it. One is struck by the contrasting human warmth of drawings by Leonardo's teacher **Andrea del Verrocchio** and by some of his pupils and other followers. Leonardo wasn't exactly cold, but something more intimidating; indifferent. (Add modern irony to his temperament, and he would be **Marcel Duchamp**.) His strangulated heart found grisly relief in contemplating war, natural disasters, and the grotesque. Through March 30. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART (MOMA QNS)

33rd St. at Queens Blvd., Long Island City (212-708-9400)—Even what's wrong with "**Matisse Picasso**," the magnificent show that deploys a hundred and thirty-three works by the twin godheads of modern painting, is revelatory. It is a double-barrelled blast of an exhibition with a popgun thesis: that Picasso and Matisse goaded and influenced each other. So do most artistic contemporaries. In any case, trying to absorb fine curatorial points of comparison between such stunners as Picasso's "Les Femmes d'Alger" and Matisse's "Bathers with a Turtle" is like trying to check the oil in a speeding truck. The show's payoff comes from the jagged, overwhelming sense it gives of how different



Liquid Liquid, at the Knitting Factory (see Night Life).

the two were as men and artists—as antithetical, and evenly matched, as Ali and Frazier. Through May 19. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, 10 to 5, and Friday evenings until 7:45.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—“Matthew Barney: The Cremaster Cycle” gathers all elements—film, sculptures, photographs, and drawings—of the five-part cycle. All films appear on loops in the galleries, with individual segments shown in the museum theatre. Through June 11. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

Madison Ave. at 75th St. (212-570-3676)—The twenty-six-year-old Ryan McGinley obsessively photographs the nights and days of his friends and lovers on New York’s Lower East Side. Presented unframed and mounted in obligatory large format, the color pictures are so achingly hip that you have an urge to resist them, but their immediacy and zeal win out. There’s nothing surreptitious about McGinley’s gaze, and his portraits look more like collaboration than documentation, from the red-headed nymph who slyly eyes the camera as she’s caught mid-leap to the man on the verge of orgasm who stares at the camera disconcertingly stone-faced. Through May 18. ♦ “Scanning: The Aberrant Architectures of Diller + Scofidio,” a retrospective featuring the designs of the husband-and-wife team. Through May 25. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6; Fridays, 1 to 9.)

P.S. 1 CONTEMPORARY ART CENTER

22-25 Jackson Ave., at 46th Ave., Long Island City (718-784-2084)—A selection of late works by the Chinese artist Chen Zhen, who died in 2000 at the age of forty-five. Chen moved to Paris in 1986 but retained a passion for Chinese medicine, which ex-

plains all the sculpted kidneys, lungs, and spleens in materials such as colored candles, blown glass, and alabaster. But the show’s centerpiece is an installation of wooden beds and chairs, stretched with animal skins and arranged in a circle to form a massive drum kit, and viewers are invited to make a joyful noise for Chen. Through May 25. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, noon to 6.)

STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM

144 W. 125th St. (212-864-4500)—The three monitors set up in the museum’s lobby for “Veni, Vidi, Video” run separate series of short videos by emerging African-American artists. The tapes are grouped thematically into “Abstraction,” “Pop,” and “Migration,” with the last by far the most engaging, possibly owing to the heightened narrative content. Of particular note are Kevin Everson’s mini-documentaries, including a three-minute piece about an immigrant mechanic named 72. Through March 30. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, and Sundays, noon to 6; Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

GALLERIES-uptown

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

HENRY FINKELSTEIN

This scion of minor art-world nobility—he’s the son of the painters Louis Finkelstein and Gretna Campbell—paints landscapes in Brittany and Maine. The locales are summery and pretty; so is the palette (lots of lemony greens and ultramarine). Dullness looms. But Finkelstein’s gonzo brushwork, thrashing through grass and branches, raises a sunstruck ruckus. Through March 8. (Kraushaar, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 212-307-5730.)

DIANA HOROWITZ / JOSEF ALBERS

The plein-air tradition lives on in these modest, lovely views of New York and Italy. Corot never saw New York Harbor, but he would have recognized—and admired—these quasi-panoramic views, where the magic is always in the middle distance. For delicacy and concision, not too many people can touch Horowitz. Downstairs, a roundup of prints by Josef Albers includes familiar color studies and some surprises. Wiggly graphic compositions from the forties show the Teutonic heavyweight in a Karin Davie mood. Horowitz through March 15; Albers through March 22. (Hirsch & Adler, 21 E. 70th St. 212-535-8810.)

ELIZABETH MAGILL

An Irish painter makes her New York debut with moody landscape paintings that vacillate between a post-Richter, camera-sly aesthetic (the images are loosely based on the artist’s snapshots) and standard-issue nineteenth-century sublime. The best canvases explore the hours of dusk and dawn, when tree line and roadside merge into one vast shadowy field, and the horizon is pierced by distant lights or a single lamppost. A glaring misstep is the occasional sequin pasted in the sky, which feels like Bob Mackie trying to muscle in on Caspar David Friedrich. Through March 29. (Artemis Greenburg Van Doren, 730 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 212-445-0444.)

MALERIE MARDER

The nude mid-afternoon nap is the subject of this prominent photographer’s video debut. Male and female, young and old, slim and fat, Marder’s twenty protagonists are shown snoozing in comfortable settings. We pore pruriently over their freckles, creases, and haunches. The footage speeds up at times, so that chests heave, nostrils flare, breathing turns to hyperventilation. Sleep looks like an odd, effortful activity—as well as a total relinquishment of control to the camera. The one holdout lies on her side in a pool of shadow, eyes defiantly open, not willing even to blink. Through March 12. (Salon 94, 12 E. 94th St. 646-672-9212.)

Short List

MAY STEVENS

Mary Ryan, 24 W. 57th St. 212-397-0669. Through March 22.

ÉDOUARD VUILLARD

Berry-Hill, 11 E. 70th St. 212-744-2300. Through March 8.

GALLERIES-CHelsea

WILLIAM BAILEY

Many hermetic still-lives, plus vaguely Balthusian nudes of young women, by the arch-conservative realist, whose changeless style is an earnest of metaphysical conviction and/or paralysis. He renders shelves and tabletops of old-fashioned ceramic and metal vessels with slightly fuzzed precision in finely adjusted grays and earthen colors with decorative blue accents. Bailey’s obsessively scrutinized vessels have more sensuous presence—sexiness, even—than his phlegmatic nudes, which isn’t to say that they have much. Calendar art for people who don’t care what year it is. Through March 15. (Robert Miller, 524 W. 26th St. 212-366-4774.)

MICHAËL BORREMAN

In his debut show in the United States, the Belgian artist shows off a virtuoso painterliness and a sphinxy conceptual poise that place him in the vicinity (and maybe the shadow) of people like Luc Tuymans and Neo Rauch. The images are alternately bewildering, fragmentary, and charming—if there’s a linking narrative, it seems to concern a group of architecture grad students tending a model landscape. Impatience is held at bay by Borremans’s inky, striking stylization. Someone to watch. Through March 8. (Zwirner, 525 W. 19th St. 212-727-2070.)

ANDY GOLDSWORTHY

Of all the artists in the wind-burned-cheek school of British hiker post-minimalists, the Scotland-based Andy Goldsworthy is the easiest sell, because he’s so intent on bringing ruddy outland beauty back alive. Three eight-foot cairns—hive-like circular pyramids of chipped and reddish sandstone slabs—surround projecting corners and a pillar of the gallery. They emit a faint, stony, nostalgic odor, as well as elegance and desperate romanticism—imagine sets by Carl Andre for a production of “Brigadoon.” Through March 15. (Galerie Lelong, 528 W. 26th St. 212-315-0470.)

Short List

LUCIAN FREUD

Marks, 523 W. 24th St. 212-243-0200. Through April 12.

GALLERIES-DOWntown

PEARL BLAUVELT

These remarkable drawings were stashed in an abandoned house in rural Pennsylvania until the current owners—artists, as luck would have it—discovered them forty years after the reclusive Blauvelt (1893-1987) moved to a rest home. Rendered with a peculiar blend of delicacy and ferocity in colored pencil on lined notebook paper, the drawings show a so-called outsider artist yearning for the unseen. With imaginary X-ray vision Blauvelt reveals a world where knee bones are visible through pants and a building’s rear windows can be spied through the brick façade. Through March 22. (K.S. Art, 73 Leonard St. 212-219-9918.)

Short List

SARAH PLIMPTON

June Kelly, 591 Broadway. 212-226-1660. Through March 11.

PHOTOGRAPHY

JOAN FONTCUBERTA

The Catalan photographer, in his latest show, continues to tweak assumptions about truth in photography, this time taking on religious fanaticism. He’s invented a secret monastic community in the

Finnish wilderness, where initiates master the art of miracles. Monks walk on water (an "easy-to-master classic" according to a typically droll wall label) and weep blood, and faces materialize on slices of ham (Jesus and Osama bin Laden put in appearances, but Ariel Sharon is, reportedly, impossible to conjure). Through March 8. (Zabris-
kie, 41 E. 57th St. 212-752-1223.)

ANDRÉ KERTÉSZ

Kertész abandoned an established career in Europe and arrived in New York City in 1936, and three decades of obscurity followed. It wasn't until 1964, when MOMA's John Szarkowski rediscovered his work and mounted an exhibition, that Kertész regained his place among the great modernists. These photographs, all taken in New York City, are those of an outsider, voyeuristic and melancholy. Kertész peers from his apartment balcony over snowy rooftops, at a woman sitting in her windowsill, and through trees into the lives of the locals below. He infused these ordinary scenes with a sense of humanity and wonder that is unrivalled in the medium. Through March 15. (Bruce Silverstein, 504 W. 22nd St. 212-627-3930.)

JAN STALLER

The massive, man-made found sculptures in Staller's new large-scale color photographs are so aggressively physical that they appear, at times, to be straining against the edges of the frame. In "Silage" an obese, lumpy snake of fabric-wrapped fodder crushes the grass beneath a broad gray sky. The effect is both menacing and oddly titillating, like an elaborate package you can't help but unwrap, even though you're aware that it houses a nasty surprise. Many of the objects are graceful despite their immobility. In "Ribbon Drawing—Korea," a twirled length of industrial ribbon jets across a plot of dark, crumbly soil, and in "Tyvek Spools," a long bank of enormous spools trail silky-looking threads. They're as syncopated and graceful as a troupe of cancan dancers. Through March 29. (Klotz/Sirmon, 511 W. 25th St. 212-741-4764.)

DAVID STEWART

In the imagistic shorthand employed by so many contemporary photographers, children symbolize misplaced sexuality (if not downright deviance), and the elderly, often the photographer's beleaguered parents, represent hopelessness, resentment, and ruined dreams. There's no such dourness in David Stewart's exuberant celebration of old farts, which could be a collection of giant stills from some fantastic independent British film about eccentric, fun-loving geriatrics. In "Game Boys," two codgers in three-piece suits play video games, the floor littered with cheese curls, their faces rapt. They reappear, with a third man, in "Six Feet Under," wearing birthday hats and dangling their feet into an open grave. The photos, which were printed using a painstaking process called Carbro, are jewel-toned and energetic, and make old age look like a Technicolor destination you wouldn't mind visiting sometime soon. Through March 31. (In Camera, 511 W. 25th St. 212-647-7667.)

PAUL STRAND

Walking through this broad collection of Strand's lesser-known work, one is struck not only by the clean, well-composed timelessness of the images but also by how many imitations his eloquent, silvery black-and-white photos have inspired over the decades. Strand, a protégé of Lewis Hine, died in 1970, but many of the photos here—a lathe, soft as wax; a plant, its leaves made velvety by frosted dew—feel both iconic and fresh. Not everything in the show is as memorable, but one has only to look at an informal suite of tiny landscapes or the shadowy, profound portraits of Strand's first wife to marvel at the photographer's gift for conveying the unexpected. Through March 15. (Greenberg, 120 Wooster St. 212-334-0010.)

JOHN WATERS

The cult director is still obsessed with Hollywood—its superstars, oddball kitsch, bad taste, and big hair—but he has graced Chelsea with

some of the weirdest, most personal art work the neighborhood has seen in a while. Waters starts with another director's film ("The Ten Commandments," "Gone with the Wind"), then photographs the most iconic moment as it whizzes by on his television. The images are blurred, although recognizable, but next comes the Waters special touch. He somehow disrupts the final image—with, for example, a stray hair, as if it were in the camera's lens at the worst possible time—tapping into all filmmakers' fear of screwing up. Through March 22. (American Fine Arts, 530 W. 22nd St. 212-727-7366.)

Short List

INGAR KRAUSS

Marvelli, 526 W. 26th St. 212-627-3363. Through March 22.

CHRIS STEELE-PERKINS

Gallery 292, 120 Wooster St. 212-431-0292. Through March 15.

THOMAS WERNER

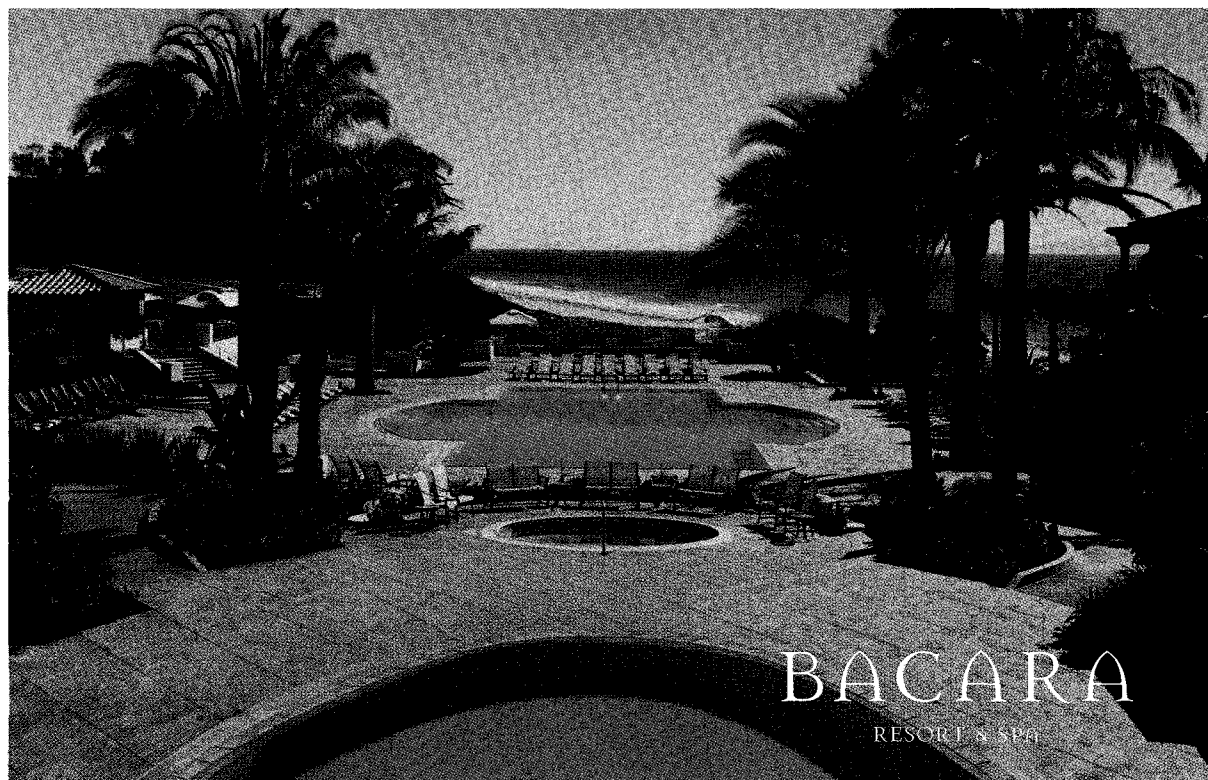
Hawkins, 526 W. 26th St. 646-638-2883. Through March 15.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

SOTHEBY'S

March 5 at 10:15 A.M.: Works by Avery, Shinn ("The Magician," a pastel expected to bring up to seventy-five thousand dollars), N. C. Wyeth, and Grandma Moses are among the highlights of a sale of American paintings, drawings, and sculptures. ♦ March 6 at 10:15 A.M. and 2: A selection of watches, wristwatches, and clocks, including a white-gold perpetual-calendar watch, circa 1995, from Patek Philippe & Co. (estimated to sell for up to three hundred thousand dollars). ♦ March 8 at 9:30 A.M. and 2: A jeroboam of Romanée-Conti

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from 1959, which is expected to bring up to thirty thousand dollars, is the highlight of a sale of wines. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.)

CHRISTIE'S

March 5 at 10 A.M.: The monthly House Sale, a broad selection of furniture, silver, rugs, porcelain, and other decorative items. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.)

DOYLE

March 5 at 10 A.M.: An auction of furniture, decorations, and paintings that also includes a selection of prints, porcelain, silver, and rugs. Property from the estate of Irene Worth is a highlight of the sale. (175 E. 87th St. 212-427-2730.)

"THE ARMORY SHOW"

INTERNATIONAL FAIR OF NEW ART

Victor Matthews, one of the many downtown artists displaced by the events of September 11th, offers a special tribute to its victims at the fifth annual fair of contemporary art works: he's painted two thousand nine hundred and eighty-five umbrellas with the image of a monarch butterfly, each of which will float in the water between Piers 88 and 90, the former site of the city's emergency-response center. (Twelfth Ave. at 48th and 50th Sts. 212-645-6440. March 7-10.)

WENDY INTERNATIONAL ANTIQUES SHOW

Wendy, the oldest producer of antique shows in the country, presents its first vetted international exhibition, featuring a range of items offered by some sixty dealers. (7th Regiment Armory, Park Ave. at 66th St. 212-472-1180. March 7-11.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA

For "La Traviata," Franco Zeffirelli scales down the elephantine grandeur of his décor to a restrained elegance—something that suits the opera's social conflicts and nervous splendor. Ruth Ann Swenson, Frank Lopardo, and Lado Ataneli lead the cast; Bertrand de Billy conducts. (March 5 and March 8 at 8.) ♦ The final performance of Zeffirelli's production of "Turandot," with Adrienne Dugger, Norah Amselem, Richard Margison, and Robert Lloyd; Marco Armiliato. (March 6 at 8.) ♦ The power couple Angela Gheorghiu and Roberto Alagna take the leading roles in a revival of Peter McClintock's production of Gounod's "Faust," with James Morris as Méphistophélès; de Billy. (March 7 at 8.) ♦ "La Bohème," with Elena Kelessidi and Ramón Vargas as Mimì and Rodolfo and Ainhoa Arteta and Vassily Gerello as Musetta and Marcello; Marcello Viotti. (March 8 at 1:30.) ♦ For a generation, Verdi's "Otello" has been the province of a single, towering figure: Plácido Domingo, who has met the title role's considerable demands with such presence and power as to scare all rivals away. But that's about to change. Domingo himself has endorsed the candidacy of Vladimir Galouzine, who leads the cast of a very Russian revival of Elijah Moshinsky's production, conducted by Valery Gergiev; his co-stars include Kallen Esperian as Desdemona and Nikolai Putilin as Iago. (March 10 at 8.) ♦ The Met's new "Les Troyens," the centerpiece of this season's citywide Berlioz bicentennial, may not get everything right, but a half-baked production of this awesome, uneven, and deeply moving masterpiece is still a feast. Ben Heppner—some eighty pounds lighter than he was last year—has returned from vocal purgatory, singing the ludicrously difficult role of Aeneas with considerable success; Deborah Voigt's Cassandra is hampered by some generic Wagnerian delivery, but the glowing strength of her voice shines through. (Michelle de Young replaces Lorraine Hunt Lieberson in the role of Dido.) Elena Zaremba, Matthew Polenzani (a radiant, pitch-perfect lyric tenor), Gregory Turay, and Robert Lloyd distinguish themselves in smaller roles. The late Maria Björnson's set, as grand and glittering as the piece itself, is the best thing about Francesca Zambello's staging, which otherwise includes a jumble of parades, a bit of interpretive dance, a subcompact Trojan Horse, and a tenor drifting in on a swing. James Levine conducts. (March 11 at 6:30.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

NEW YORK CITY OPERA

Gotham's essential second house starts its spring season with a surprise, filling a revival of its 1990 production of "A Little Night Music" with an all-star cast of singing actors—including Juliet Stevenson, Claire Bloom, Jeremy Irons, and Marc Kudisch—that should take Sondheim's most beloved musical back to its Broadway roots. Scott Ellis directs, with choreography by Susan Stroman; the invaluable Paul Gemignani conducts. (New York State Theatre. 212-307-4100. Preview performances take place March 7 at 8, March 8 at 1:30 and 8, and March 9 at 1:30, with an opening-night gala on March 11 at 6:30.)

ENCOMPASS OPERA THEATRE:

"APPROACHING INFINITY"

Nancy Rhodes, the company's artistic director, has conceived a double bill of one-act chamber operas, presenting the New York premiere of Hans Werner Henze's "The End of a World" (an absurdist opera first written for radio, in 1953) along with John Harbison's "A Full Moon in March" (a ritualistic setting of a W. B. Yeats dance play, from 1979). The performers include the soprano Désirée Halac, the countertenor Derek Lee Ragin, and the dancer Kerry Stichweh; Kenneth Hamrick conducts. (Connelly Theatre, 220 E. 4th St. 212-206-1515. March 7-8 at 8 and March 9 at 3. Through March 30.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC

After arriving in the United States from China in 1982, Bright Sheng quickly placed himself at the forefront of a wave of Asian composers who broadened the language of contemporary music without diluting the discipline of the Western tradition. But it's the canny combination of substance and style (learned from his mentor Leonard Bernstein) that's made Sheng's music stick. The world premiere of Sheng's "The Song and Dance of Tears," a concerto for pi-pa, sheng (a Chinese mouth organ), and orchestra (with the soloists Wu Man and Wu Tong), is the highlight of David Zinman's next concert with the Philharmonic, which also features Leon Kirchner's Music for Cello and Orchestra (with Yo-Yo Ma), a lyrical and exquisitely crafted work in the tradition of Sessions and Berg, and Christopher Rouse's "Seeing," for piano and orchestra (with Emanuel Ax), a simultaneous tribute to Schumann and the rock guitarist Skip Spence. (March 5-6 at 7:30, March 7 at 2, and March 8 at 8.) (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656.)

"FANTASTIC VOYAGES:

THE GENIUS OF HECTOR BERLIOZ"

Colin Davis, the grand marshal of Lincoln Center's Berlioz bicentennial celebrations, concludes his concerts with the London Symphony Orchestra (and the L.S.O. Chorus) by conducting two of the composer's grandest works, each a spectacular hybrid of symphony, opera, and oratorio. March 7 at 8: "Roméo et Juliette," Berlioz's fervent tribute to Shakespeare, can seem a little disjointed when presented in its entirety, yet its prodigious invention and strange beauty are still the stuff of dreams. Sara Mingardo, Stuart Neill, and Alastair Miles are the vocal soloists. ♦ March 9 at 3: "La Damnation de Faust," featuring Petra Lang, Neill, Miles, and Jonathan Lemalu in the leading roles. (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-721-6500.)

VIENNA PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

It might seem the ultimate in cheek for an early-music conductor to tell this legendary ensemble—which, after all, has an "authentic" tradition of its own—how to play. But since Nikolaus Harnoncourt studied cello with the V.P.O.'s former principal, Emanuel Brabec, before launching his career as an evangelist for historical performance, he's part of the extended family—and his interpretations can have an intriguing blend of comfort and surprise. March 7 at 8: Gidon Kremer, another musician of protean expressivity, joins the orchestra for Berg's Violin Concerto, in a concert that concludes with Bruckner's Symphony No. 4 ("Romantic"). ♦ March 8 at 8: A town-and-country

BOOK CURRENTS

Mycological Positivism



Nicholas P. Money is wild about mushrooms. "I count myself among the few humans who love fungi, truly, madly, deeply," he writes in **MR. BLOOMFIELD'S ORCHARD** (Oxford), a companionable foray into the realm of stinkhorns, black mold, yeast, and even *Malassezia*, the dandruff-related fungus that Head & Shoulders shampoo is designed to combat. Money is an English-born mycologist who has spent his life uncovering the secrets and lore of fungi, including varieties that thrive in solid granite, feed on human flesh, assist in crime-scene investigations, and, as in the case of a particular armillaria covering twenty-two hundred acres in Oregon, grow to become the largest organisms on earth.

Of course, the fruiting bodies of various fungi are prized for their epicurian and hallucinogenic properties. In **MOREL TALES** (Illinois), the sociologist Gary Alan Fine makes an amusing study of the "culture of mushrooming," tagging along with intrepid members of the Minnesota Mycological Society as they perform the "naturework" of plucking such deep-woods delicacies as slippery jacks and bringing them home to sauté. Wild mushrooms, Fine writes, are "culturally mediated objects," and millions of risk-loving Americans now enjoy the weekend thrill of harvesting them.

PETER JORDAN'S WILD MUSHROOM BIBLE

(Lorenz Books) is too hefty for your backpack, but perfect for the kitchen. Jordan is a British mushroomer who offers tips on identifying toothsome amethyst deceivers or lethal death caps, recipes for whipping up Hedgehog Mushroom Pancakes or Shaggy Ink Cap Soup, and endless enthusiasm: "Imagine the ultimate triumph of finding your first giant puffball—its head actually bigger than your own!"

—Mark Rozzo

RICHARD MCGUIRE

program combining waltzes by Johann Strauss II (and his brother Josef) with Beethoven's "Pastoral" Symphony. ♦ March 9 at 2: Schubert's Symphony No. 4, the "Tragic" (a hard-to-bring-off piece that Harnoncourt invests with special radiance), and Dvořák's Symphony No. 9, "From the New World." (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800.)

AMSTERDAM BAROQUE ORCHESTRA

Lincoln Center's "Bach Variations" series continues with a concert by Ton Koopman's renowned ensemble, which features the Cantatas Nos. 202 and 51 ("Jauchzet Gott in allen Landen"), each with the soprano Lisa Larsson, and the Second Brandenburg Concerto. (Alice Tully Hall. 212-721-6500. March 8 at 8.)

STUTTGART CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

Dennis Russell Davies conducts the orchestra in a pair of concerts, March 9 at 8: Tchaikovsky's Serenade for Strings is the anchor for an otherwise nonventurous program of Haydn (the rarely performed Symphony No. 65) and William Bolcom (the New York premiere of "Medusa," a monodrama featuring the soprano Catherine Malfitano, the composer's devoted interpreter). (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800.) ♦ March 10 at 8: The orchestra loosens up for a visit to the Metropolitan Museum, performing an all-Philip Glass program that features the New York premieres of the Symphony No. 3 and the "Concerto Tyrol" (with Davies at the piano). (Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. 212-570-3949.)

BOSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

The orchestra offers the first two concerts of a three-concert residency at Carnegie Hall. March 10 at 8: Tan Dun, whose impressionistic style and keen sense of showmanship have propelled a double career in film and concert music, conducts a program of ethnically grounded works by Shostakovich, Cage ("The Seasons," a piece deeply influenced by Indian spirituality), and Britten (the eternally East Anglian "Four Sea Interludes" from "Peter Grimes") along with the New York premiere of his own "The Map," a multimedia extravaganza of Chinese culture featuring the cellist Yo-Yo Ma. ♦ March 11 at 8: Bernard Haitink conducts a concert of Mozart (including the concert aria "Ch'io mi scordi di te," featuring both the pianist Andrés Schiff and the soprano Anna Maria Martinez) and Mahler (the Symphony No. 4). (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800.)

RECITALS

CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER

"Modern Mavericks," a concert of music for flutes and percussion, featuring the American premiere of John Tavener's "A Sacred Dream" (with the soprano Heidi Grant Murphy) along with works by Cage, Crumb, Kirchner ("Flutings," performed by Paula Robison, its dedicatee), Chen Yi, and Bernstein ("Halil"). (Alice Tully Hall. 212-875-5788. March 7 at 8 and March 9 at 5.)

PRISM PROJECTS

The ensemble (including the pianist Eric Moe) offers the New York premiere of "Uncovered by Night," a "ghost opera" on American themes by Roger Zahab, as the highlight of a pair of concerts. The first evening opens with a song cycle on Irish poems by Gilda Lyons; the second with piano works by Lee Hyla, Lou Harrison, and others. (St. Peter's Church in Chelsea, 346 W. 20th St. March 7-8 at 8. Tickets at the door.)

SEQUITUR: MUSIC BY GYÖRGY KURTÁG

This industrious and intrepid new-music ensemble, which excels at injecting a sense of drama into the most challenging of programs, should be a perfect

match for the great Hungarian iconoclast, whose music is at once inviting, mysterious, and inscrutable. Vocal works are a specialty of his, and this concert will feature two of them (including "Messages of the Late Miss R.V. Trousova," with the soprano Elizabeth Farnum) along with a selection of instrumental pieces (including "Quasi una Fantasia," a pocket piano concerto, with Steven Beck). (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 212-854-7799. March 8 at 8.)

WOLFGANG HOLZMAIR

The Austrian baritone, who employs his light, tenorial voice with aristocratic taste and an extraordinary sensitivity to text, offers "A Journey



The Philharmonic premieres "The Song and Dance of Tears," a new concerto by Bright Sheng, beginning March 5.

Through the Austrian Alps," a program (with the pianist Russell Ryan) that combines the eponymous Krenek cycle with a cache of Schubert lieder. (Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. 212-570-3949. March 8 at 8.)

CHRISTOPH PRÉGARDIEN

The tenor sings Schumann's "Eichendorff Liederkreis," along with a mixed group of Schubert songs. Michael Gees accompanies him. (Alice Tully Hall. 212-721-6500. March 9 at 2.)

MONICA GROOP

Songs by Mozart, Mahler, Schoenberg, Sibelius, and Grieg grace a concert (with the pianist Rudolf Jansen) by the superlative Finnish singer, who employs her warm mezzo-soprano with an austere and compelling artistry. (Frick Collection, 1 E. 70th St. 212-288-0700. March 9 at 5.)

FRIENDS & ENEMIES OF NEW MUSIC

A clutch of New York's finest lyric composers (including Ned Rorem, David Del Tredici, Jorge Martin, and Daron Hagen) accompany the singers Paul Sperry and Robert Osborne in an evening of song. (Greenwich House Music School, 46 Barrow St. March 9 at 8. For information about tickets, call 212-749-1324.)

"SOUNDS FRENCH" FESTIVAL

The best of new French music (by a diverse group of composers young and old) comes to New York

for a month of concerts, unified by a commitment to the Gallic values of rationality and refinement. For a complete listing of concerts and films, see the festival's Web site at www.soundsfrench.com. Some highlights: March 8 at 6: Michel Galante and the Argento Chamber Ensemble offer "Loops and Resonances," a program of works for instruments and live electronics by Philippe Manoury, Gérard Pesson, Philippe Hurel, and others. (Philosophy Hall, Columbia University; enter at Broadway and 116th St. Tickets at the door.) ♦ March 9-10 at 8: The Guggenheim Museum's "Works and Process" series presents a concert devoted to the music of Philippe Manoury and Philippe Schoeller,

featuring performances by Ensemble Alterance along with a video showing of excerpts from Manoury's opera "K..." (after a story by Kafka). (Fifth Ave. at 89th St. 212-423-3587.) ♦ March 11 at 8: Marilyn Nonken devotes an evening to the complete piano music of Tristan Murail (a master of the multi-layered "spectral" style of composition who has taught at Columbia since 1997), including the premiere of "Les Travaux et les Jours," a work written especially for her. (Miller Theatre, Broadway at 116th St. 212-854-7799.) (Through March 27.)

ENSEMBLE AMARCORD

Five former choristers from St. Thomas Church in Leipzig (Bach's old gig), now all grown up, sing a program of Byrd, Poulenc, Stravinsky, Paul McCartney, and more. (Holy Trinity Church, 316 E. 88th St. 212-289-4100, ext. 210. March 10 at 8.)

CLANCY NEWMAN

The young cellist, winner of the 2001 Naumburg Cello Award, presents an enterprising program of Carter, Schumann, and Beethoven (the Sonata in D Major, Op. 102, No. 2), along with the world premiere of Kenji Bunch's "Broken Music." (Alice Tully Hall. 212-721-6500. March 11 at 8.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

READINGS

March 6 at 7:30: The Poetry Society of America presents an evening of Irish and Yiddish verse, with Nuala Ni Dhomhnaill, Irena Klepfisz, Paul Muldoon, C. K. Williams, and Leonard Wolf. (Hemmerdinger Hall, New York University, 100 Washington Sq. E. For more information, call 212-254-9628.) ♦ March 7 at 7: The novelist Michael Cunningham, the author of "The Hours," and the writers Ben Greenman and J. Robert Lennon read from their work. The band One Ring Zero will also be on hand. (Galapagos, 70 N. 6th St., Williamsburg, Brooklyn. 718-782-5188.) ♦ March 10 at 7: Joseph Holmes and Leigh Newman read from their short fiction. (Junno's, 64 Downing St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ March 10 at 8: The actors Blair Brown, Philip Bosco, and Jim Dale perform a dramatic reading of Brian Friel's play "Faith Healer." (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500.)

For more information, call 212-254-9628.) ♦ March 7 at 7: The novelist Michael Cunningham, the author of "The Hours," and the writers Ben Greenman and J. Robert Lennon read from their work. The band One Ring Zero will also be on hand. (Galapagos, 70 N. 6th St., Williamsburg, Brooklyn. 718-782-5188.) ♦ March 10 at 7: Joseph Holmes and Leigh Newman read from their short fiction. (Junno's, 64 Downing St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ March 10 at 8: The actors Blair Brown, Philip Bosco, and Jim Dale perform a dramatic reading of Brian Friel's play "Faith Healer." (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500.)

TALKS

March 5 at 6: Spencer Wells, a genetics researcher and the author of the book "Journey of Man," talks about humanity's family tree. (New York Academy of Sciences, 2 E. 63rd St. For more information, call 212-838-0230, ext. 322.) ♦ March 6 at 7:30: The writer Naomi Wolf discusses "Misconceptions," her account of becoming a mother. (Barnes & Noble, Broadway at 82nd St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ March 10 at 6:30: The critic Harold Bloom considers sexual jealousy in the works of Shakespeare. A troupe of actors will assist. (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. For more information, call 212-327-3399.)

MOVIES OPENING

BRINGING DOWN THE HOUSE

A comedy about a divorced corporate lawyer (Steve Martin) who meets an ex-con (Queen Latifah) over the Internet. Adam Shankman directed. Opening March 7.

HIDEO NAKATA'S CHAOS

A noir thriller from the director of "Ring." In Japanese. Opening March 7. (Cinema Village.)

IRREVERSIBLE

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening March 7. (Angelika Film Center and Chelsea Cinemas.)

LAUREL CANYON

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening March 7. (Empire 25, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Union Square.)

NOWHERE IN AFRICA

Caroline Link wrote and directed this drama about a Jewish family that flees Nazi Germany for a farm in Kenya. In German. Opening March 7. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema.)

THE SAFETY OF OBJECTS

Rose Troche adapts the stories of A. M. Homes, set among a group of suburban families. The cast includes Glenn Close, Dermot Mulroney, Patricia Clarkson, and Joshua Jackson. Opening March 7. (First & 62nd Street Cinemas and Union Square.)

TEARS OF THE SUN

The leader of a Navy SEAL unit (Bruce Willis) attempts to rescue a doctor (Monica Bellucci) working with African refugees, in an action-adventure film directed by Antoine Fuqua ("Training Day"). Opening March 7.

TEEN

Reviewed below in Film Notes. Opening March 5. (Film Forum.)

FILM NOTES

ABBOTT AND COSTELLO MEET FRANKENSTEIN

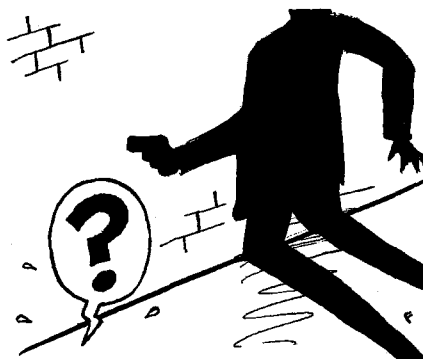
Universal revitalized its baggy-pants franchise with this amiable 1948 monster mash. The saturnine Abbott and the ever-mugging Costello show vaudevilian panache as baggage handlers who have the misfortune to process the coffins of Count Dracula (Bela Lugosi) and Frankenstein's Monster (Glenn Strange). Add the tortured Wolf Man of Lon Chaney, Jr., and you've got a snug-fitting context for Costello's infantile frenzies. The heavies maintain their deadpans and get the biggest laughs. (Strange's Monster does a horrified double-take at his first sight of Costello.) The last shot features Vincent Price as the voice of the Invisible Man, a come-on for future, inferior comedies of terrors.—*Michael Sragow* (Moving Image; March 8.)

ALL THE REAL GIRLS

For his follow-up to "George Washington," the young director David Gordon Green has turned his gaze upon a quiet mill town in North Carolina. You can tell the place is quiet because Paul (Paul Schneider) enjoys a reputation as its most carousing and cavalier stud. In fact, Paul is a nondescript time-waster of twenty-two, a blunt boy whose best friend is really his mother (Patricia Clarkson). Having tasted and discarded half the local womenfolk, Paul is nonplussed when he finds himself falling for, and then two-timed by, Noel (Zooey Deschanel). Green presents this as an education of the heart, a lyrical act of persuasion that is backed up by random shots of sunsets and tumbling creeks. To the rest of us, it looks like come-uppance. Why the sweetly unreadable Noel should hang around the place a minute longer is anybody's guess.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 2/17 & 24/03.) (Angelika Film Center.)

CHICAGO

The time is the nineteen-twenties, but the setting is so stylized, so shamelessly grounded in a hundred other shows and films, that "Chicago" barely qualifies as a period piece; indeed, it merrily jabs at the celebrity-lust of our own era. Catherine Zeta-Jones is Velma Kelly, and Renée Zellweger is Roxie Hart. Each is a man-killer, and each resides in jail, plotting her de-



fense with the silken legal help of Billy Flynn (Richard Gere). The music and lyrics by Kander and Ebb operate on the old-fashioned principle that every song should be a showstopper, regardless of whether the show should be stopped. The director, Rob Marshall, cuts away furiously during every song, and this chronic wish to glance aside makes us wonder: could the performers not weather the camera's unstinting gaze? The only player to conquer the movie is Zeta-Jones, who gets by on a full tank of unleaded oomph. The film has punch, but it never really conveys the delicious, redeeming sense that life can be lived on the hoof.—*A.L.* (1/6/03) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea West, Cinema 1, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, Union Square, and Ziegfeld.)

CITY OF GOD

Just how far into your face can a movie get? This one has every intention of leaving you scalded and bruised. Set in Rio de Janeiro, it was directed by Fernando Meirelles, who tries every trick known to cameramen: freeze frames, whip pans, multiple dissolves, slow motion, double motion, any kind of motion. The object is to keep pace with his characters, the young and dispossessed of the Brazilian

more powerfully here than he did in "Pearl Harbor." He seems a put-on movie star, a lazybones puffed by helium bursts of publicity.—*David Denby* (3/3/03) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

DARK BLUE

Another tale of crooked cops, this one set in 1992, at the time of the Rodney King verdict. Kurt Russell, his good looks puffy and slumped, plays a Los Angeles police veteran who has been promoted to lieutenant by dint of dogged persistence. His partner (Scott Speedman) is learning the ropes of corruption, while the squad's boss (Brendan Gleeson) has been tangled up in them for years. The screenplay is adapted from a James Ellroy short story; we get the Ellroy smell of moral rot, but none of his momentum—these errant souls may be driven, but in circles, and they spend so much time bawling their predicament that the cracking of crime feels like a passing hobby. Only in the last half-hour does the movie, like Los Angeles itself, ignite. Ron Shelton, the director, picks up the pace as Russell scrambles through the inferno of the King riots. With Ving Rhames as a senior policeman of surreal nobility.—*A.L.* (2/17 & 24/03) (Astor Plaza, Battery Park 16, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

FACES

John Cassavetes' semi-documentary method is peculiar in that its triumphs and its failures are not merely inseparable from the method but often truly hard to separate from each other. The acting that is so bad it's embarrassing sometimes seems also to have revealed something, so we're forced to reconsider our notions of good and bad acting. But working out of themselves (as they do), his actors can't create characters. Their performances don't have enough range, so we tend to tire of them before the movie is finished. Still, a lot of people found this 1968 psychodrama agonizingly true and beautiful. It's about the meaninglessness of life for the well-heeled middle-



"Ten," a new film from the director Abbas Kiarostami.

slums. The movie hastens roughly from the nineteen-sixties to the eighties, as we watch the boys either die or grow old before their time. The result is a jolting ride, but such is the skill on show that we run the risk of being too exhilarated to notice every death; does the film convince in its plea for the forgotten poor, or are we encouraged to forget them as they fall? In Portuguese.—*A.L.* (1/20/03) (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, New York Twin, and 62nd & Broadway.)

DAREDEVIL

Ben Affleck is a blind lawyer who becomes a superhero at night, and much of this new comic-book spectacular is so dark that you can't see it. Not that you're missing anything. What can be seen is derivative, flat, and halfhearted. Dressed in a maroon jumpsuit, Affleck flips from nowhere to nowhere in a digital New York that seems based on sketches rejected by the creators of the first "Batman" movie. Affleck tries for a light-voiced, unemphatic presence, and he registers no

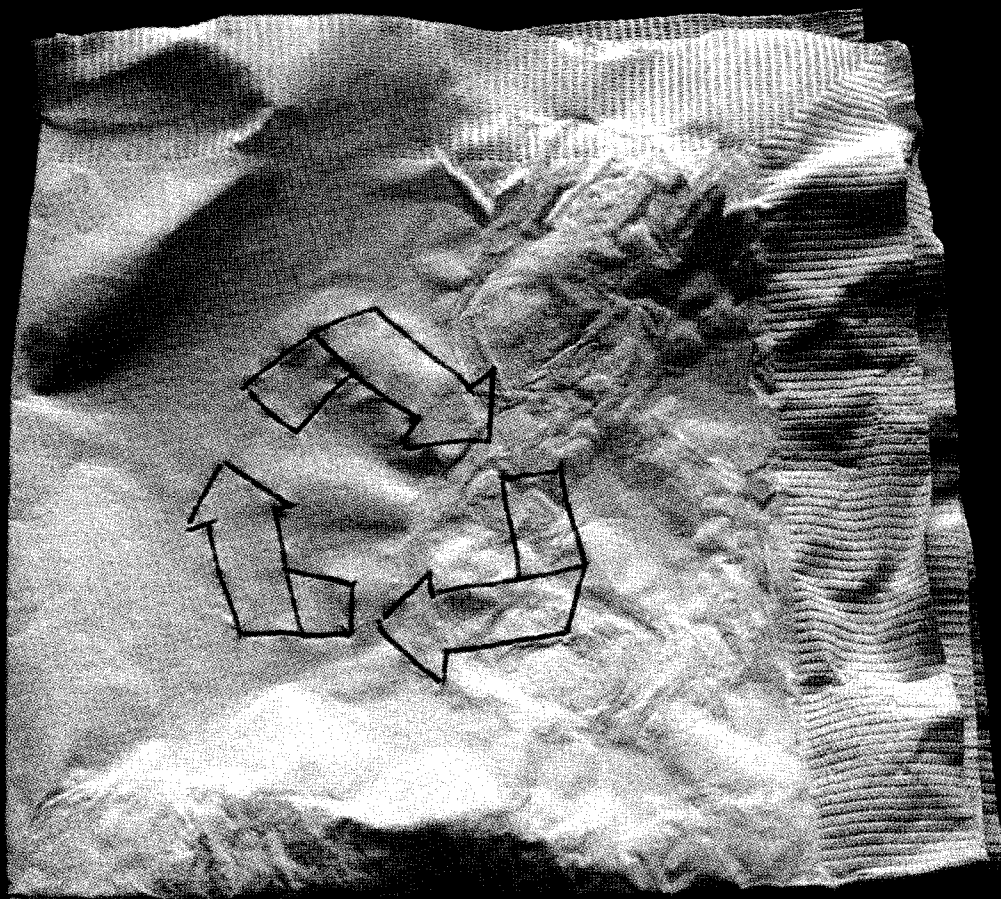
aged; the deliberately raw material is about affluence and apathy, the importance of sex, and the miseries of marriage. With John Marley, Gena Rowlands, Lynn Carlin, and Seymour Cassel.—*Pauline Kael* (Gramercy Theatre; March 6 and March 8.)

GERRY

Two guys called Gerry (Casey Affleck and Matt Damon) get lost in the desert in Gus Van Sant's homage to nothing happening at all, Beckett-style. After misfires like "Psycho" and "Finding Forrester," it's good to see Van Sant back on firmer, independent footing. The two actors trudge endlessly, searching for a way out of their sun-dazed nightmare, and they occasionally break the desolate silence with improvised banter. The movie is filled with shots like an extended closeup of the two Gerrys walking quietly side by side, their heads bobbing in rhythm. Stupor eventually sets in, but it's like being covered in a warm blanket.—*Bruce Diones* (Angelika Film Center.)

LEAH TINARI

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THE HOURS

It has to overcome an over-all morbidity, a fractured time sequence, and Philip Glass's intrusive, chiming score, and, amazingly, it does. Stephen Daldry directed this adaptation of Michael Cunningham's prize-winning 1998 novel, from a script by David Hare. They've fashioned a lovely, serious work—as good as any recent “literary” movie—devoted to two themes, the variety of human bonds, especially the bond of love, and the gift that the dying make to the living. Nicole Kidman gives a revelatory performance as Virginia Woolf, both in 1923, at the time of writing “Mrs. Dalloway,” and in 1941, when she loaded her coat with stones and walked into a river. Julianne Moore is a depressed Los An-

people could agree on what it might be.—D.D. (3/3/03) (Battery Park 16, Beekman, Chelsea Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

LOST IN LA MANCHA
Louis Pepe and Keith Fulton's documentary offers a new twist on the age-old pleasure of watching somebody truly and sumptuously screw up. Better still, none of it is his fault. The twist is that the fall guy, in this instance, is as playful and amenable a figure as exists in modern filmmaking: Terry Gilliam. As he tries to heave into motion his long-pondered adaptation of “Don Quixote,” everything that can go wrong goes wrong, graced by a few extra glitches that even the most capricious of gods would not have dared to



Bruce Willis and Monica Bellucci in “Tears of the Sun,” opening March 7.

geles housewife in 1951, and Meryl Streep plays a contemporary New York literary editor who hopes to give a party for a poet friend (Ed Harris) dying of AIDS. The widely separated episodes fit together as surely and lightly as dancers in a Balanchine ballet.—D.D. (12/23 & 30/02) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 72nd Street East, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

THE LIFE OF DAVID GALE

A hyper-articulate and, at times, heartfelt movie, but a mess nonetheless. Kevin Spacey stars as a philosophy professor and anti-death-penalty advocate who winds up on death row in Texas. Laura Linney plays his academic and protest-movement colleague, whom he allegedly raped and murdered. Kate Winslet turns up as an ace investigative reporter from New York who finds the last-minute evidence that may exonerate him. Some of the academic atmosphere is knowing and fun, and Spacey and Linney have a couple of lovely scenes together, but the thriller mechanics of the movie (it's plotted against a clock) insult the audience. At the climactic moment, Winslet's rented car stalls like a dumb burro, and she has to run through what appears to be the entire state of Texas. Alan Parker directed, and the script was written by an ex-philosophy professor, Charles Randolph. The filmmakers' point of view regarding the death penalty is so confusing that no two sane

arrange. The combination of a Don (Jean Rochefort) so sick that he cannot dismount from his horse, Spanish weather of Biblical ferocity, and NATO jets roaring over the set would reduce most directors to despair, yet Gilliam comes up grinning. This account of his tribulations drags toward the end, but you leave with not only an admiring grasp of his Quixote-like obsession but also an absolute determination never to work in pictures.—A.L. (2/3/03) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema.)

OLD SCHOOL

In the land of the February movie, the one-joke comedy is king. The joke here is that three thirtysomething men turn a house near a college campus into a “civilian fraternity.” Luke Wilson plays the good-guy hero, and Vince Vaughn is the motormouthed instigator, but the movie belongs to Will Ferrell, the former “S.N.L.” comic who goes gleefully berserk, running amok over the sets and the script (some of his best lines feel like eleventh-take improvisations). Todd Phillips, the writer-director who gave us “Road Trip,” proves to be something of a savant at fusing the crude and the clever. (A scene in which Ferrell shoots himself with a tranquilizer dart eventually becomes a sendup of “The Graduate.”) For fans and survivors of eighties pop music, the unusual variation the film's wedding singer puts on “Total Eclipse of the Heart” is priceless.—Michael Agger (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd

Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

THE PIANIST

Roman Polanski's drama about the survival of a real-life Polish Jew, the pianist Wladyslaw Szpilman (Adrien Brody), during the grim days of the Holocaust is a movie that has been perfectly produced. The sense of scale and detail is exact, and the violence is neither exaggerated nor minimized but presented with clear-eyed accuracy. Yet this is not a work of great originality or imagination. Its protagonist lacks depth, and the theme of survival through hiding is, by its very nature, redundant. The playwright Ronald Harwood adapted the 1946 book that Szpilman wrote about his experiences without attempting to open up the hero at all. Is he ashamed, defiant, guilty? Grateful for his luck? We haven't a clue. His survival is an anomaly, a mistake, a joke—and that may be why the story appealed to Polanski. Shot largely in Warsaw.—D.D. (1/13/03) (Battery Park 16, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kew Gardens Cinema, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE RECRUIT

Colin Farrell, the young Irish actor, has dark, hurting eyes, stubble on his upper lip and chin, and a slender, lithe body. He can't miss as a star, and he gives promise of knowing what he's up to as an actor. He's also the only interesting thing in “The Recruit,” yet another paranoid thriller. This one is about training for the C.I.A., and it also stars Al Pacino in his domineering-satanic mode, complete with an opera-house Mephistopheles beard and glittering eyes. The Australian-born filmmaker Roger Donaldson has always been a competent director, but he doesn't have the wit to rise above a bad script, which, in this movie, leaves the unfortunate impression that the recruits are training less for intelligence work than for future appearances in action movies.—D.D. (1/27/03) (Battery Park 16, Cinema 3, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, 34th Street Theatre, and Village East Cinemas.)

SHANGHAI KNIGHTS

Owen Wilson, not yet a bankable movie star, and Jackie Chan, not ready for retirement, return for a second round of D.I.Y. stunts and business-casual wisecracks in this sequel to “Shanghai Noon.” In other words, the very definition of pointless fun. Chan seems to have recovered fully from his recent run-in with Jennifer Love Hewitt, and Wilson can make even a dopey hat seem funny. To complete the trilogy, the two should make “Shanghai School” and play kung-fu gym teachers.—M.A. (Battery Park 16, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

TEN

When last we saw the Iranian director Abbas Kiarostami, he was capturing the songs of Ugandan street children with his digital video camera, delighting in the portability and intimacy of the new technology. In this revelatory film, he reverses course and fixes his camera to the dashboard of a car driven by an unnamed, beautiful divorcee (Mania Akbari), as she navigates the streets of Tehran. (The camera faces inward.) It's a postmodern gesture, a movie seemingly without a director, a drama that's also a documentary. The streets are real, but the conversations are scripted. The talk centers on the corseted lives of women in modern Iran and the cross-cultural similarities can be striking: take away the headscarves and these women could be Connecticut housewives. There are many piercing moments, and Kiarostami's minimalist methods enhance a palpable sense of lives choked with frustration. Ironically, for a film about hidden women, the natural performance by Amin (Amin Maher), the ten-year-old son of the divorcee, reveals the most about their situation. He rants and whines, directing precocious, cutting insults at his mother, unaware of the punches he's landing. In Farsi.—M.A. (Film Forum.)

ALSO PLAYING

AMANDLA!

A REVOLUTION IN FOUR-PART HARMONY
Film Forum.

LE CERCLE ROUGE

Quad Cinema.

OPEN HEARTS

Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.

THE QUIET AMERICAN (12/2/02)

Cinema 2, Kew Gardens Cinema, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, and Village Theatre VII.

RUSSIAN ARK (12/16/02)

Cinema Village and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.

SPIDER

Angelika Film Center.

TALK TO HER (11/25/02)

BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, Kew Gardens Cinema, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Sunshine Cinema.

THEATRE ADDRESSES*Unless noted, call 212-777-FILM for show times.*

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.

Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.

BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn.

Battery Park 16, West St. at Vesey St.

Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.

Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.

Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.

Cinemas 1, 2, and 3, Third Ave. at 60th St.

Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (212-924-3363).

East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave.

at 86th St.

84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.

Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.

(212-398-3939).

59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.

Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave.

(212-727-8110).

First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.

42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.

Kew Gardens Cinema, 81-05 Lefferts Blvd.,

Queens (718-441-9835).

Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.

Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St.

(212-757-2280).

Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.

New York Twin, Second Ave. at 66th St.

19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.

Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.

Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (212-688-3800).

Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.

The Screening Room, 54 Varick St.

(212-334-2100).

72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.

64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.

62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.

Sunshine Cinema, 139-143 E. Houston St.

Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.

34th Street Theatre, 312 W. 34th St.

Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.

Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.

Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.

Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.*Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.***AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE**

35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)

Through March 30: Films selected by the New York Film Critics Circle. March 8 at 2: "Blazing Saddles" (1974, Mel Brooks), introduced by A. O. Scott. ♦ March 8 at 4:15: "Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein" (†), introduced by Lisa Schwarzbaum. ♦ March 9 at 2: "Shadows" (1960, John Cassavetes), introduced by Matt Zoller Seitz. ♦ March 9 at 4:30: "Slacker" (1991, Richard Linklater), introduced by Andrew Johnston. ♦ Repertory nights. March 8-9 at 6:30: "Frenzy" (1972, Alfred Hitchcock).

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES

32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—March 5-11: The Tenth New York Underground Film Festival. See www.nyuff.com for a complete schedule.

BAM ROSE CINEMAS

30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-777-3456)—

Through March 9: "Spike Lee's Brooklyn." March 6

at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Jungle Fever" (1991). ♦

March 7 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "She's Gotta Have

It" (1986). ♦ March 8 at 2, 4:30, and 7:30: "Do the

Right Thing" (1989). ♦ March 9 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and

9:10: "Crooklyn" (1994). ♦ Mario Bava films. March

10 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Planet of the Vampires"

(1966). ♦ A Budd Boetticher retrospective. March 11

at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "The Tall T" (1957).

DONNELL MEDIA CENTER

20 W. 53rd St. (212-621-0609)—A Doris Chase

retrospective, in celebration of the artist's eightieth

birthday. March 6 at 2:30: Three documentaries by

Chase and a documentary about her career. Selections

from Chase's dance series will screen throughout the day.

FILM FORUM

W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—

Through March 27: "Fassbinder," a six-week retrospec-

tive. All films are in German. March 5 at 2,

4:30, 7, and 9:30: "Mother Küsters Goes to Heaven"

(1975). ♦ March 6-8 at 1, 2:50, 4:40, 6:30, 8:20, and

10:10: "Ali: Fear Eats the Soul" (1974). ♦ March 9-

11 at 1:15, 3:20, 5:30, 7:40, and 9:45: "Veronika

Voss" (1982).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL

55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—The cinematog-

raphy of Raoul Coutard. March 11 at 12:30, 3:30,

6:30, and 9: "The Sailor from Gibraltar" (1967,

Tony Richardson).

GRAMERCY THEATRE

127 E. 23rd St. (212-777-4900)—Through March

13: "John Cassavetes: From the Archive." March

6 at 2 and March 10 at 6: "Shadows" (1959). ♦

March 6 at 4 and March 8 at 9: "Faces" (†). ♦

March 6 at 6:30: "Big Trouble" (1986). ♦ March

6 at 8:15 and March 9 at 7:15: "Gloria" (1980). ♦

March 7 at 2:30 and March 8 at 6:15: "Love

Streams" (1984). ♦ March 7 at 5:30 and March 9

at 2: "A Woman Under the Influence" (1975). ♦

March 7 at 8:30: "Opening Night" (1978). ♦

March 8 at 1: "Husbands" (1970). ♦ March 8 at

3:45 and March 9 at 4:45: "The Killing of a Chi-

nese Bookie" (1976).

PIONEER THEATRE

155 E. 3rd St. (212-254-3300)—March 5-11: "The

French Connection" (1971, William Friedkin).

SUNSHINE CINEMA

139-143 E. Houston St. (212-358-0573)—Mid-

night movies. March 7-8: "Hairspray" (1988,

John Waters).

THALIA THEATRE

Symphony Space, 2537 Broadway, at 95th St. (212-

864-5400)—"New Voices Since the Eighties."

March 8 at 2 and 7: "Dead Man" (1996, Jim Jar-

musch). ♦ March 8 at 4:15 and 9:15: "Ghost Dog:

The Way of the Samurai" (1999, Jarmusch). ♦

March 9 at 1 and 6:15: "Reservoir Dogs" (1991,

Quentin Tarantino). ♦ March 9 at 3 and 8:15: "Pulp

Fiction" (1994, Tarantino).

WALTER READE THEATRE

Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—Through March

6: "The Last of the Pioneers: Allan Dwan," a

twenty-film survey of the director's career. March

5 at 8: "East Side West Side" (1927), with live or-

chestral accompaniment by the Ensemble Sospeso. ♦

March 6 at 1: "Brewster's Millions" (1945). ♦

March 6 at 2:45 and 6:30: "Getting Gertie's Garter"

(1945). ♦ March 6 at 4:20: "Slightly Scarlet"

(1956). ♦ Starting March 7: "Rendez-Vous with

French Cinema 2003." March 7 at 1 and 6:15 and

March 8 at 6:45: "Adolphe" (2002, Benoît Jac-

quot). ♦ March 7 at 3:45 and 8:45 and March 11

at 6:15: "See How They Run" (2002, Michel

Blanc). ♦ March 8 at 1:30 and March 10 at 3:15 and

8:45: "C'est le Bouquet" (2002, Jeanne Labrune). ♦

March 8 at 3:45, March 9 at 8:45, and March 11 at

3:45: "My Idol" (2002, Guillaume Canet). ♦ March

8 at 9:15, March 9 at 5:30, and March 11 at 1: "The

Adversary" (2002, Nicole Garcia). ♦ March 10 at 1

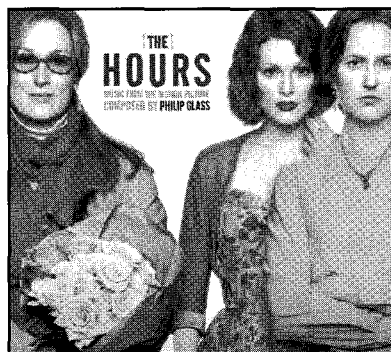
and 6:15 and March 11 at 8:45: "In My Skin"

(2002, Marina de Van).

BORDERS. Words on Music

Borders' music specialist Brian McClemens says:

"Deeply-moving and meditative, Philip Glass' score for *The Hours* features compositions for strings and piano that perfectly complement the subtle and complex nature of the film."



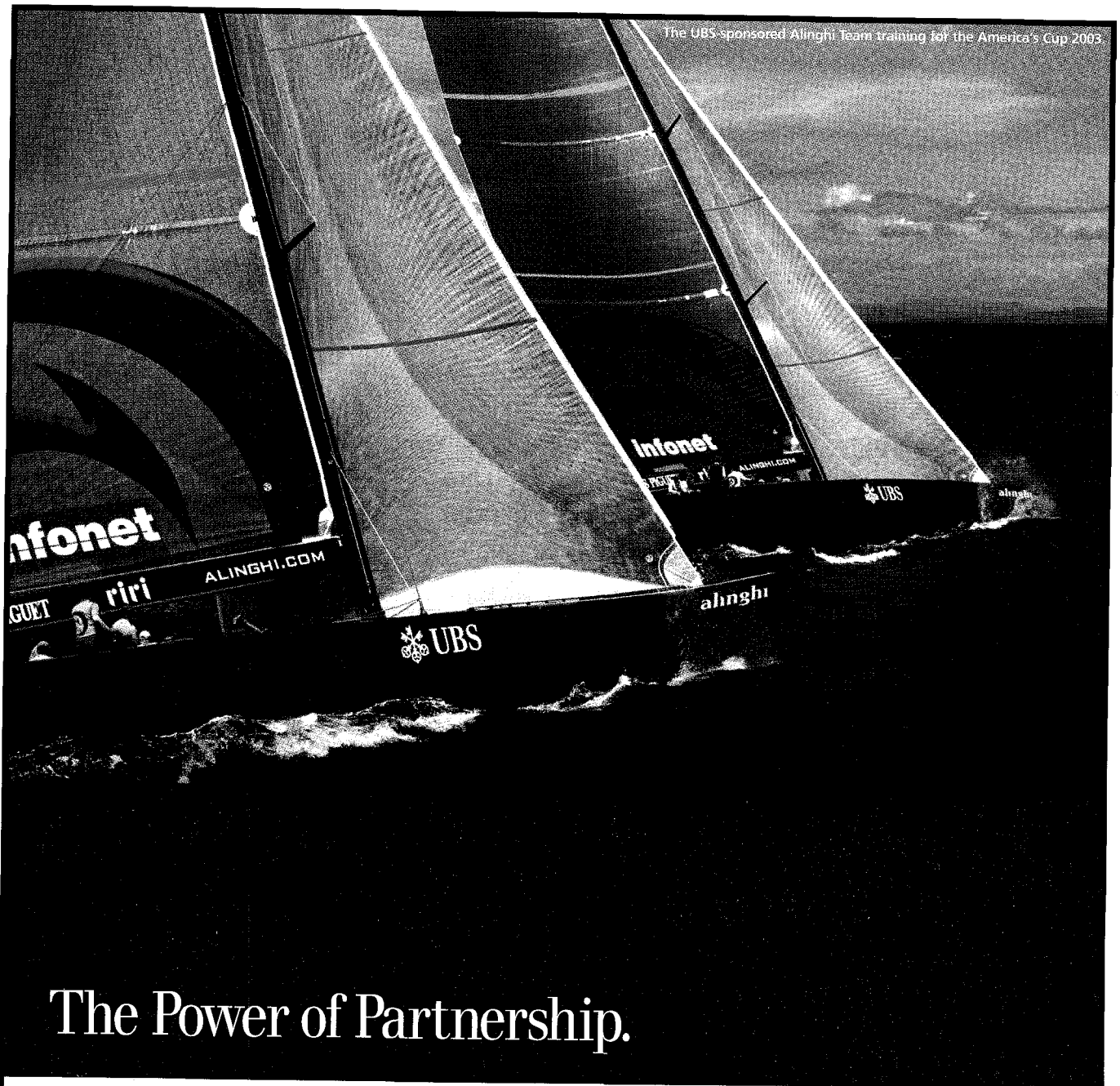
Nominated for 9 Academy Awards
including Best Original Score and Best Picture

Philip Glass' lush score heightens the film's emotional quotient
and gives the story added grandeur, melancholy and uneasiness.

Los Angeles Times

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THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT WAGING PEACE



President Bush has now taken to suggesting that a war to get rid of Saddam Hussein be thought of as analogous to the Second World War. Last week, the President spoke in utopian terms of the aftermath of such a war, for which he is openly impatient. Never mind disarmament; the true objective, Bush said, is to replace Iraq's tyrant with a regime that, as he described it, might have pleased the Founding Fathers, and which would serve as a model for the democratization of the rest of the Middle East. "America has made and kept this kind of commitment before in the peace that followed a world war," he said. "After defeating enemies, we did not leave behind occupying armies, we left constitutions, and parliaments. . . . In societies that once bred fascism and militarism, liberty found a permanent home."

As uplifting as the memory of the aftermath of the Second World War may be, the analogy is at best premature. In 1945, the Allied victory was total, the surrender of Germany and Japan unequivocal, the war decisively won. In 2003, the destruction of Saddam's regime will be an incremental victory, like the liberation of Paris on the way to Berlin. Nor are the repercussions of even a suc-

cessful invasion guaranteed to be uniformly favorable. Just as America's defeat in Vietnam did not precipitate defeat in the struggle against Soviet Communism, victory in Iraq will not necessarily precipitate victory in the struggle against terror, or insure the proliferation of peace in the Middle East.

A lot has happened since 1945, and in the interim America's military excursions have more often propped up, or left in their wake, unsavory regimes whose subjects have felt betrayed by the promises of freedom made to them. Bush may see an opportunity to reverse this trend in Iraq, but what he and others in the Administration don't explain is how we're supposed to get there from here. Our military supremacy is not in question, but even the

President does not propose that America can unilaterally win the sort of peace he seeks. "Rebuilding Iraq will require a sustained commitment from many nations," he said. Yet, after six months of diplomatic efforts, Washington is more isolated than ever. The allies that the Administration has lined up are not only less numerous than its opponents but also less significant in the balance of international power and opinion. The fifteen members of the U.N. Security Council are now bitterly split, with an Anglo-American-Spanish-Bulgarian bloc pushing for a new resolution to go directly to war and a Franco-German-Russo-Sino-Syrian camp seeking to give Saddam four more months to decide whether to disarm. With the lines so drawn, and France and Russia threatening to use their vetoes, the council's decision depends heavily upon its half-dozen undecided seat-holders—Angola, Cameroon, Chile, Guinea, Mexico, and Pakistan. All but one would have to support the new resolution for a war to have the U.N.'s imprimatur. In bidding for the votes of these unlikely arbiters of the will of "the international community," the Administration has taken an especially blunt tack. As one diplomat told the *Washington Post*, the message from the White House is "You are not going to decide whether there is war in Iraq or not. That decision is ours, and we have already made it. It is already final. The only question now is whether the Council will go along with it or not."

Demanding someone's acquiescence by saying that his vote doesn't really count



ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTHELL

sounds like the height of cynicism, and stirs unhappy memories of the butterfly ballots and imperious courts that brought Bush to office. But the council's vote does matter. Why else is the President making friendly phone calls to countries like Cameroon, which has one of the most corrupt governments on earth; Mexico, whose once pro-American President Vicente Fox has been angered by the Administration's empty promises on immigration reform; and Angola, where America sponsored a civil war in the mid-seventies that ended only last year? Bush has even taken to calling the President of Guinea to ask after his kidneys, which are reported to be failing. The President's latest musings on postwar Iraq suggest that he understands it will not be enough to win the war militarily. It is the peace that will measure America's success or failure in Iraq, and, more broadly, set its reputation for good or ill as the imperial global power. This is why many of those who oppose the war abroad are made as uneasy by the prospect of an American triumph as by the possibility that war in Iraq will unleash greater disorder and catastrophe.

Under these circumstances, the President's speech was most striking for what it did not mention: Afghanistan. American aid has had some success in improving Afghan health care, education, and infrastructure, but these benefits are largely limited—like the power of the postwar government itself—to Kabul.

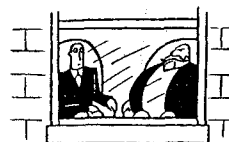
Washington has blocked efforts to create a countrywide peacekeeping force to patrol the warlord-controlled hinterlands, and Bush has now diverted the energies of his special envoy to Kabul by having him handle relations with the Iraqi opposition as well. Hours before Bush's speech, the Afghan President, Hamid Karzai, appeared before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, asking for money and pleading, "Don't forget us if Iraq happens." The next day, Karzai had an audience at the White House, but his smiles and grateful words did not mask the darker reality. Afghanistan is in considerably more perilous shape than it was a year ago, and reports from the Pakistani border regions indicate that remnant forces of the Taliban and Al Qaeda are gearing up for a spring offensive that would coincide with the campaign in Iraq. Yet, even as the Administration pledges billions of dollars to buy the support of Turkey (and cuts tactical deals with Ankara that place Iraq's Kurds once more in jeopardy), it is reneging on congressional funding commitments to Karzai's government.

That said, the rout of Saddam is likely to be celebrated in Iraq with even more jubilation than greeted the flight of the Taliban and its Al Qaeda sponsors from Kabul. Bush's greatest test will then begin, and the test will be all the more difficult if the war is waged in the face of Security Council opposition. This is Washington's

war, and the post-Saddam scenarios describe an American occupation for an indefinite future. With each passing decade since the Second World War, the legacy of such adventures has come increasingly to be measured in "blowback," and does not inspire confidence. It is not enough for Bush to say, "We will make this an age of progress and liberty. Free people will set the course of history and free people will keep the peace of the world." The course he has set requires him to prove it.

—Philip Gourevitch

THE CLICKER MUST-SEE SADDAM



Saddam Hussein looks good in a suit, doesn't he? What was that green notebook on the table for? He holds a pen in his right hand—guess that means he's right-handed. The pen: isn't that a Uni-Ball Vision, the one where you can see how much ink is left in the barrel? Do they have a Staples in Baghdad? These thoughts were about all that was inspired by the actual content of Dan Rather's "60 Minutes II" interview with the President of Iraq; the missing content of Operation Desert Kiss-Up was much more interesting. Rather, who worked for more than a year to arrange the interview, was congratulated by some journalists for the "get": he was the first American to interview Saddam in more than ten years. CBS made the most of its ostensible triumph by parcelling out tidbits of the interview over four days, like a striptease artist showing a little skin, and then the network took it all off Wednesday night on "60 Minutes II." The program drew seventeen million viewers—an impressive figure, though it is about ten million less than the number of people who watched the season premiere of "American Idol," in January.

Saddam came across in the interview as thoughtful, confident yet not cocky, and open to whatever Rather might throw at him. He was the picture of reasonableness, offering to debate President Bush on TV: "He will explain why he wants to go to war; I will explain why we are insistent on peace and we want to



"It sounds like Osama bin Laden, but it could be your mother."

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maintain peace." The debate, he went on, would be "without tricks, without editing, without prepared speeches." You almost believed him, even though, as Rather pointed out, CBS was prohibited from using its own cameras or recording equipment or translators, and had to wait for an edited version of the interview to be delivered, several hours later. Making expansive hand gestures that flattered viewers with an implied inclusiveness, a sense of give-and-take, Saddam paid the American character a high compliment: "On films, we see that the Americans are courageous. When challenged to a duel, they will not back down." (The films that illustrate the trait that Saddam finds so admirable are presumably not produced by the branches of the media that Saddam says are "controlled by Zionism.")

On Paula Zahn's CNN morning show on Friday, Rather, asked if there was one question he wished he'd asked Saddam during the interview, said that there were a hundred questions he wished he'd asked. Good answer; it expresses humility and deflects criticism. But what prevented Rather from asking, say, five or ten of those hundred questions? (He spent a good five minutes on Saddam's suggestion that he debate President Bush on TV.) Saddam, after saying, "We do not have missiles that go beyond the prescribed ranges," talked about the "huge lie that was being waged against Iraq about chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons." There was no follow-up to this statement or to any of the other beyond-dubious declarations made by the Iraqi President, whose constant references to "peace" and "humanity" (he used each word almost twenty times during the hour) seemed to lull Rather into a hopeful complacency: Mustn't upset the dictator. If it stopped short of being a brilliant performance on Saddam's part, it was still an extremely useful opportunity for him. In addition to being able to depict himself, unchallenged, as the possessor of a gravity and a probity that have sometimes been missing from American public life (his statement "When we were young, we decided to place ourselves to the service of our people" provides quite a contrast to the storied Boola-Boola world view of a certain American leader, who, when he was young, placed himself at the ser-

vice of his fraternity), he came across so well that he decided to broadcast the interview on Iraqi television shortly after it aired here.

People who interview celebrities are used to being told by handlers that certain areas are no-fly zones: Don't ask So-and-So about her mother, her weight gain, her stormy relationship with What's-His-Name. For this tradeoff you get continued access, the thinking goes. And perhaps that was the thinking behind the slow-pitch-softball game that Rather played with Saddam. In two interviews televised later that night—Barbara Walters' with Robert Blake, on ABC, and Troy Roberts' post-Saddam sit-down on CBS with Robert Chambers, who had just been released after serving a fifteen-year prison sentence for killing Jennifer Levin in Central Park in 1986—the interviewers pushed their subjects to the point where they both felt compelled to deny that they were "monsters." Rather never pushed Saddam remotely near that point; his *modus operandi* was to politely beg to differ when Saddam, say, claimed not to have lost the Gulf War. Rather got the "get," but he let it get away.

—Nancy Franklin

URBAN GAS PUMP CLOSED



As demolition begins this spring on the Gaseteria filling station at the corner of Lafayette and Houston Streets, the presence of a conspicuous New York brand will be diminished. This scruffy property, along with twenty-four other Gaseterias in the city, will be leased to British Petroleum and become a B.P. Connect Station, complete with cappuccino machines, solar-powered canopies, and automated pumps with Internet access. An ecologically suggestive green-and-yellow motif will replace the simple, begrimed emblem of a royal-blue semicircle and a red semicircle embracing the word "Gaseteria," in bold black type.

"To me, it looked like a hamburger in the beginning," Oscar Porcelli, Gasete-

ria's founder, said of the logo, which he designed himself. "The colors were the American flag—red, blue, and white." Porcelli is sixty-seven and small in stature, with an ebbing white hairline. He keeps his office at the company's vast terminal in Greenpoint, Brooklyn, where there is a lot full of retired Gaseteria signs and a valve attached to the



Buckeye Line, a pipeline that brings gasoline to New York from Linden, New Jersey. The gas flows into above-ground tanks, which, altogether, hold about three million gallons. When Porcelli came to the United States from Argentina, in 1957, he worked in construction, bought storefronts, dry cleaners, and a dance club, and eventually started building gas stations. He came up with the idea for Gaseteria in 1976. "Those were the crazy days of disco and name-using. There was Danceteria, Caviarteria—lot of the -terias were going on. So I did Gaseteria. It was catchy." The company, which initially distributed gas for the majors, like Amoco and Mobil, went independent in 1980. Because of its low prices, it attracted cabbies, and was, at its peak, the largest independent in the metropolitan area. Today, it owns almost thirty acres of land in the five boroughs.

Porcelli bought the station at Lafayette and Houston in the mid-seventies, for a hundred thousand dollars. (It's now worth ten million or so.) Every day at five o'clock, hundreds of cabbies, from all over the city, migrate to this Gaseteria, and the Amoco across the street, to hand over their cabs to the night shift, and then take the F train home to Brooklyn.

On a recent Friday afternoon, a continuous stream of cabs with off-duty

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signs pulled up to the Lafayette Street Gaseteria. There were fifteen or twenty taxis at the station, their drivers getting gas or cleaning out trash or having a smoke. Singh, from India, stood by the cashier's window, smiling. "I always come here. I don't care for what brand. I just need a good gas—that's it. That's what we are falling for, good gas and more mileage." Singh had some ideas for the new B.P. station. "There's a very nasty bathroom here. One room. Make a little shop for the coffee, where people can stand. The tank is very old, change those tanks." He surveyed the old station. "It's going to be exciting."

Porcelli plans to keep one station open in each borough, for symbolic purposes. What's more, in the coming months, Gaseteria's gritty, indigenous identity will go designer, too, when the logo is stretched across youthful chests on T-shirts produced by Lulita Duke, a friend of Porcelli's daughter Natalia. The shirts are already available, for thirty-five dollars, at a boutique a few blocks from another Gaseteria station, on Avenue B. Natalia is also thinking of manufacturing bluejeans with a Gaseteria patch embroidered on the back pocket. "Gaseteria is very real, very raw, it's sexy and hip," Marcello Porcelli, Oscar's son, said. "It just represents everything that's beautiful and wonderful and real about New York. I gave one of my ex-girlfriends a Gaseteria jumpsuit, and she looked just gorgeous in the thing."

—Dana Goodyear

TOY DEPT. STORE TO STORE



Kate Karcher Clark, president and founder of the seven-year-old Yottoy Productions, and Peter Doodeheefver, vice-president and creative director of same, set out one recent morning to sell their wares to toy stores, lugging a twenty-pound royal-blue canvas bag that was filled with their idiosyncratic stuffed toys. Clark is thirty-six; Doodeheefver is forty. She is five feet two, with the voice and manner of a child; he is a foot taller, and exceedingly calm

and benevolent. She is married to a real-estate lawyer, lives on the Upper East Side, and has a four-month-old baby named Grace Olivia. He is a bachelor, lives on the Lower East Side, refuses to have a TV set, and, according to Clark, "reads all the time." One of their first stops was Kidding Around, a store on West Fifteenth Street.

"The lady there will be tough," Clark said. "Buyers are so opinionated. They find something wrong with everything." Clark snatched one of her favorite toys from the bag and held it close—Harry the Dirty Dog, based on the 1956 picture book of that name.

"We've got to hold on to the integrity of our toys," she said. "We want them to be affordable—twenty dollars or less. But we don't want to sacrifice any of the quality. Some big companies have tried to buy us, but we've been saying no."

Inside Kidding Around, they were met by the owner, Christina Clark, a tall, big-boned woman.

"I've got to leave almost immediately," the owner said. "What have you got there? The Ugly Duckling?" Doodeheefver handed her a seven-inch version of the fairy-tale duck. It had a purple chenille body and wings, a silk chest, and red-orange webbed feet. He also gave her a gold-crowned frog. "I never liked the Frog Prince," the buyer said. Clark looked distraught. Doodeheefver patiently smoothed the Frog Prince's chest. He said, "Each fairy-tale toy comes with a mini-book attached."

"I'd rather have a full-fledged book with pictures," the owner said. "You need pictures, lots of pictures, to hold a kid's attention."

"And here's our Harry," Doodeheefver went on, handing her a ten-inch toy dog, in white chenille plush. "Soft and cuddly. With the black spots sewn on, just the way he looks in the book."

"I like the book," the owner said. "I sell the book."

Clark, hugging her Ugly Duckling, spoke up: "Peter made the prototype of Harry last summer and took it to Cambridge, to show to Margaret Bloy Graham, who drew Harry in the book. All these years, she never permitted anybody else to make him as a toy. But she liked us."

"Nice," the buyer said.

Doodeheefver held up some more toys. "This is Bear, lazy and rich, and

Hare, who tricks him, from the book 'Tops & Bottoms.'" Bear's leather shoelaces were untied.

"People are always asking for bears," the buyer said. "Do the shoes come off?"

"No, but the laces are real," Clark said.

"You gotta know what the kids are gonna do," the buyer said, tugging at the bear's shoes.

"And here's the doll we made for the new book, 'Frida,' about the Mexican artist," Doodeheefver said. "The little white pinafore over her dress is organza."

"I think she's great!" the buyer said. "I was brought up in Mexico. I like Frida."

Total sale: \$611.81. Yottoy's profit: \$61.18.

The next stop was A Bear's Place, on Lexington Avenue at Sixty-first Street. The owner-buyer, Jeffrey Haber, a thirty-nine-year-old fellow with uncombed blond hair, resembled a pudgy, ungainly boy. He was an enthusiast. He gave a big kiss to the Yottoy rendition of the Saggy, Baggy Elephant. ("Good. His trunk is up. My grandmother always said it's bad luck if the trunk is down.") He approved of the Pokey Little Puppy. ("I sell tons of puppies.") He was all for the Frog Prince. ("I do extraordinarily well with frogs. They're sweet. Frogs don't harm anybody.") Total sale: \$836.54. Yottoy's profit: \$83.64.

Clark and Doodeheefver were happy about this, but now they were trying to face a problem that had come up with Barnes & Noble.

"After trying and trying, I finally got an appointment with the Barnes & Noble toy buyer for the whole country," Clark said. "She's giving us fifteen minutes. She wants Harry, but she doesn't want to pay eight-fifty for him. She asked us to make a prototype of a smaller Harry for five dollars. If she likes it, she could buy two or three thousand. But he isn't covered in nice chenille; he isn't soft and fluffy like our nice Harry, who has the integrity."

"We make some things just so that our five young designers can go on working," she continued. "For example, we're making a plastic figure of the Incredible Hulk. We're doing our best with him, making him a rich emerald green, so that he looks strong and powerful. But we're just doing it for the money; we don't love the Incredible Hulk."

—Lillian Ross

THE FINANCIAL PAGE THE WAGES OF WAR

On April 18, 1942, sixteen American bombers under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Jimmy Doolittle took off from the aircraft carrier *Hornet* and flew six hundred miles to bomb Tokyo. The bombers did little damage, and all but one of them were forced to crash-land when they ran out of fuel. But, after four months of unrelentingly bad war news, Americans saw the mission as a psychological turning point. Days after the raid, the U.S. stock market, which had plummeted after the attack on Pearl Harbor, began to rally sharply. The U.S. economy, meanwhile, was booming, and grew more than fifteen per cent in both 1942 and 1943.

In 1950, the United States went to war in Korea. As military spending soared, the economy, which had been in recession in 1949, took off, too, growing 8.7 per cent in 1950 and 7.6 per cent in 1951. It happened again in the early years of the Vietnam War.

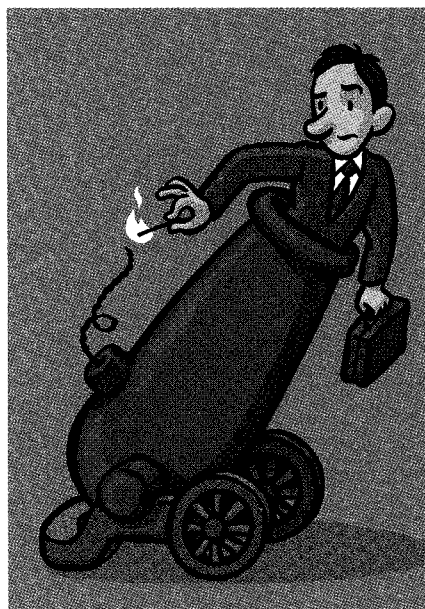
The lesson seems clear enough: war means economic growth and a stock-market rally. So, with the slowdown lingering, and the United States apparently on the verge of invading Iraq, people are wondering whether a war, whatever its benefits and costs, would give the economy a jolt. But, as the investment advisory has it, past performance is no guarantee of future results.

War would still affect the economy, only not in the manner that it has before. To begin with, this war would cost much less than past wars in relation to the size of the economy. The U.S. spent almost three trillion dollars, in current dollars, on the Second World War—a hundred and thirty per cent of the gross domestic product. During both Korea and Vietnam, the country devoted almost fifteen per cent of its G.D.P. to war. Most estimates of what an Iraq war would cost suggest that the U.S. would spend somewhere between fifty billion and a hundred and fifty billion dollars—a lot of money, but a tiny fraction (between 0.5 and 1.5 per cent) of the G.D.P.

This war is also likely to go quickly. During the Second World War and the

Korean War, mobilization transformed the economy. Not this time—G.M. won't be retooling to turn out tanks. What's more, the defense budget is already immense, so that the additional cost of waging war would be relatively small, assuming that things didn't go terribly. The era of military Keynesianism, in this country, at least, is dead, and we really shouldn't mourn its passing: an economy that relies heavily on military spending is unhealthy anyway.

In this case, the major effect of the war would be more psychological than material. Uncertainty about the conflict has been weighing on the economy for months. C.E.O.s, shackled by scandal and slumping stock prices, have shown



little enthusiasm for making major investments while war looms, and consumer confidence has fallen to stunningly low levels. Meanwhile, the stock market has risen when invasion has looked less likely and dropped whenever it seemed imminent.

Why are executives and investors so leery of war, when it has historically been a stimulant? For one thing, they are justifiably worried about the short-term price of oil, which is already very high. Even if a war were to go well, Iraqi exports—about two and a half million barrels a day—could disappear from the market for a long time. That would increase fuel costs and slow economic growth. Then, there is the so-called worst-

case scenario. William Nordhaus, a Yale economist who has done the most serious published analysis of the costs of a potential war, suggests that if conflict were to spill over to the rest of the region, and if Islamists took over OPEC nations and boycotted the U.S., then the economy would enter a recession, the G.D.P. would shrink by four hundred billion dollars, and we would have to pay almost eight hundred billion dollars in extra oil costs. This is not the kind of war boom people have in mind.

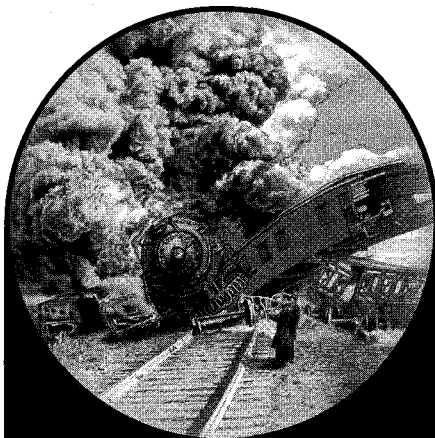
The likelihood of everything going so wrong is small, but it's almost impossible to get anyone to say how small. In his scale of scenarios, Nordhaus doesn't factor in likelihood. In a recent *Wall Street Journal* survey of economists' projections for the year ahead, many of them chose not even to take into account the possible impact of war.

Businesses and investors are grappling with an extreme version of a problem that was diagnosed in 1921 by the economist Frank Knight, who drew a distinction between risk and uncertainty. Risk, he argued, is something you can calculate—the probability of someone losing at roulette. Uncertainty, though, arises when the odds of success or failure are incalculable—the probability of someone deciding to play roulette in the first place, and being pickpocketed on the way out of the casino. Weighing the consequences of war with Iraq, businesses and investors are dealing with uncertainty, not risk.

Uncertainty doesn't have to lead to paralysis. Knight believed that businesses prosper only when their executives are willing to act in spite of it. Hunkering down is no more rational than acting boldly. But, because Americans are already so gloomy about the economy, they're understandably more worried about the pitfalls of war than attracted to its potential benefits.

If the U.S. goes to war and wins decisively, much of the uncertainty will drain away, and the economy should get a pop, as it has in the past, but only because resolution would eliminate the anxiety that talk of war created in the first place. This time, you might say, it wouldn't be war that causes a boom. It would be peace.

—James Surowiecki



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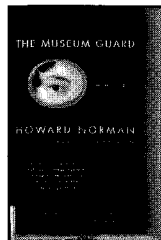
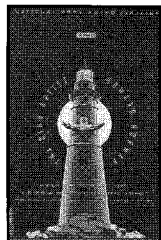
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BY SIMON SCHAMA

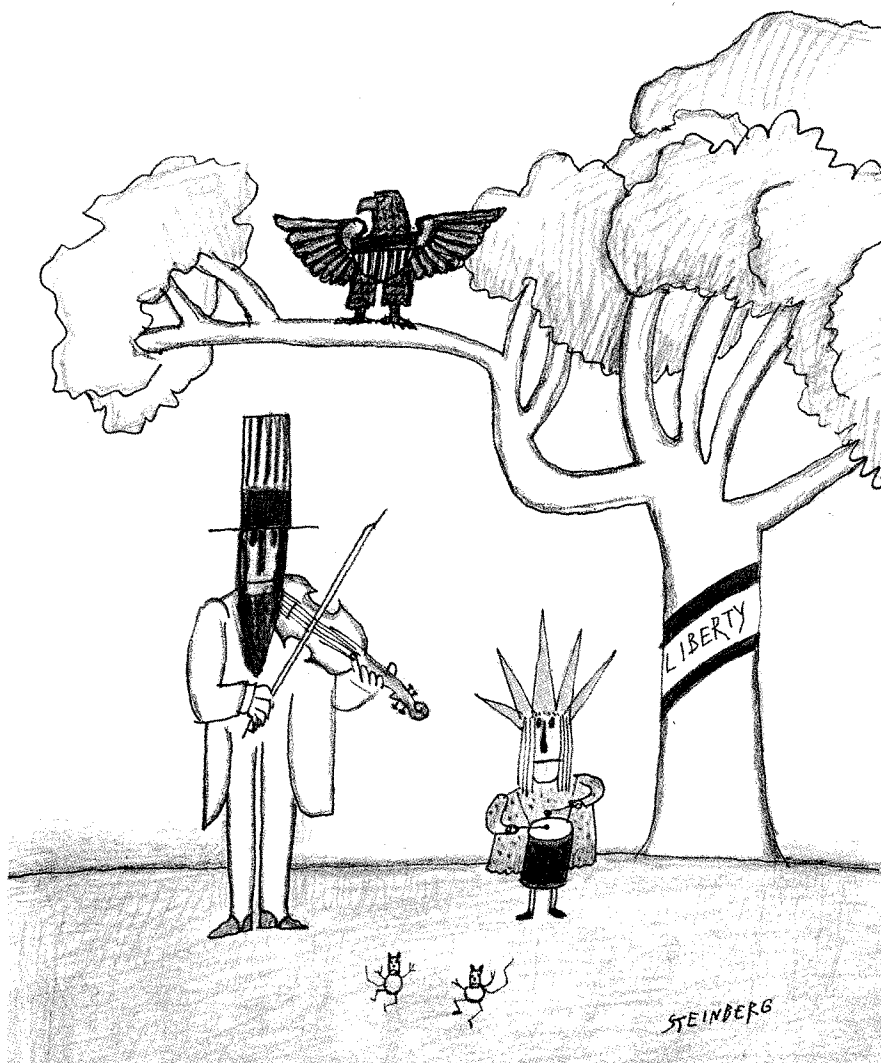
On the Fourth of July in 1889, Rudyard Kipling found himself near Mammoth Hot Springs in Yellowstone with a party of tourists from New England. He winced as a "clergyman rose up and told them they were the greatest, freest, sublimest, most chivalrous, and richest people on the face of the earth, and they all said Amen." Kipling—who had travelled from India to California, and then across the North American continent—was bewildered by the patriotic hyperbole that seemed to come so naturally to the citizens of the United States. There were many things about America that he loved—battling with a twelve-pound Chinook salmon in Oregon; American girls ("They are clever; they can talk. . . . They are original and look you between the brows with unabashed eyes")—and he did go and live in Vermont for a while. But he was irritated by the relentless assurances that Americans seemed to require about their country's incomparable virtue. When a "perfectly unknown man attacked me and asked me what I thought of American Patriotism," Kipling wrote in "American Notes," his account of the journey, "I said there was nothing like it in the Old Country," adding, "Always tell an American this. It soothes him."

The Norwegian writer Knut Hamsun, who spent two miserable periods in the American Midwest in the eighteenthies—working as, among other things, farmhand, store clerk, railroad laborer, itinerant lecturer, and (more congenially) church secretary—treated the street parades of veterans "with tiny flags in their hats and brass medals on their chests marching in step to the hundreds of penny whistles they are blowing" as if the events were curiously remote tribal rituals. The fact that streetcars were forbidden to interrupt the parades and that no one could absent himself without incurring civic disgrace both interested and unsettled Hamsun. Something ominous

seemed to be hatching in America: a strapping child-monster whose runaway physical growth would never be matched by moral or cultural maturity. Hamsun gave lectures about his stays in the United States at the University of Copenhagen, and then made them into a book, "The Cultural Life of Modern America," that was largely devoted to asserting its nonexistence. Emerson? A dealer in glib generalizations. Whitman? A hot gush of misdirected fervor. For Hamsun, America was, above all, bluster wrapped up in dollar bills. "It is incredible how naively cocksure Americans are in their belief that they can whip any enemy whatsoever," he wrote. "There is no end to their patriotism; it is a patriotism that never flinches, and it is just as loudmouthed as it is vehement."

By the end of the nineteenth century, the stereotype of the ugly American—voracious, preachy, mercenary, and bombastically chauvinist—was firmly in place in Europe. Even the claim that the United States was built on a foundation stone of liberty was seen as a fraud. America had grown rich on slavery. In 1776, the English radical Thomas Day had written, "If there be an object truly ridiculous in nature, it is an American patriot, signing resolutions of independency with the one hand, and with the other brandishing a whip over his affrighted slaves." After the Civil War, European critics pointed to the unprotected laborers in mines and factories as industrial helots. Just as obnoxious as the fraud of liberty was the fraud of Christian piety, a finger-jabbing rectitude incapable of asserting a policy without invoking the Deity as a co-sponsor. This hallelujah Republic was a bedlam of hymns and hosannas, but the only true church was the church of the Dollar Almighty. And how could the cult of individualism be taken seriously when it had produced a society that set such great store by conformity?

SAUL STEINBERG, "UNTITLED" (1980) © THE SAUL STEINBERG FOUNDATION, THE NEW YORKER, 11/03/80



The face of the unloved American did not, of course, come into focus all at once. Different generations of European critics added features to the sketch depending on their own aversions and fears. In the early nineteenth century, with Enlightenment optimism soured by years of war and revolution, critics were skeptical of America's naïve faith that it had reinvented politics. Later in the century, American economic power was the enemy, Yankee industrialism the behemoth against which the champions of social justice needed to take up arms. A third generation, itself imperialist, grumbled about the unfairness of a nation's rising to both continental and maritime ascendancy. And in the twentieth century, though the United States came to the rescue of Britain and France in two world wars, many Europeans were sus-

picious of its motives. A constant refrain throughout this long literature of complaint, and what European intellectuals even now find most repugnant, is American sanctimoniousness, the habit of dressing the business of power in the garb of piety.

Too often, the moral rhetoric of American diplomacy has seemed to Europe a cover for self-interest. The French saw the Jay Treaty, of 1794, which regularized relations with Britain (with which republican France was then at war), as a cynical violation of the Treaty of Alliance with France, of 1778, without which, they reasonably believed, there would have been no United States. In 1811, it was the British who felt betrayed by the Americans, when Madison gave in to Napoleon's demands for a trade embargo while the "mother country" was fighting for

survival. But the gap between principles and practices in American foreign policy was as nothing compared with the discrepancy between the ideal and the reality of a working democracy. Although nineteenth-century writers paid lip service to the benevolent intelligence of the Founding Fathers, contemporary American politics suggested that there had been a shocking fall from grace. At one end was a cult of republican simplicity, so dogmatic that John Quincy Adams's installation of a billiard table in the White House was taken as evidence of his patrician leanings; at the other was a parade of the lowest vices, featuring, according to Charles Dickens, "despicable trickery at elections, under-handed tampering with public officers . . . shameless truckling to mercenary knaves."

A few transatlantic pilgrims, of course, saw American democracy haloed with republican grandeur. When, in 1818, the twenty-three-year-old Scot Fanny Wright, along with her younger sister Camilla, visited the Capitol, the congressional morning prayer—"May the rod of tyranny be broken in every nation of the earth!"—caused her to tremble with admiration. Only later did she concede that she might have mistaken the commercial bustle of the country for democratic zeal. And, indeed, for most European travellers extravagant idealism was followed by an equally unbalanced disenchantment. Nikolaus Lenau, a German poet who told a friend he meant to stay in the United States for five years, managed only a brief period, from 1832 to 1833. He could not tolerate a country where, he claimed, there were no songbirds. (In the eighteenth century, the Dutch naturalist Cornelius De Pauw, lecturing on America to the court of Frederick the Great, had solemnly insisted that dogs in the New World never barked.)

Other characteristics of American life alienated the Romantics: the distaste for tragedy (a moral corrective to illusions of invincibility); the strong preference for practicality; the severance from history; and, above all, what the Germans called *Bodenlosigkeit*, a willed rootlessness, embodied in the flimsy frame construction of American houses. Europeans watched, pop-eyed, while whole houses were moved down the street. This confirmed their view that Ameri-

cans had no real loyalty to the local, and explained why they preferred utilitarian “yards” to flower gardens. No delphiniums, no civility.

The British who arrived in the United States in the eighteen-thirties and forties had imagined the young republic as a wide-eyed adolescent, socially ungainly and politically gauche, but with some hint of promise. What they found was a country experiencing an unprecedented growth spurt, both territorial and demographic, and characterized by an unnerving rudeness, in both senses of the word. Ladies and gentlemen dodged quids of tobacco juice and averted their gaze from the brimming cuspidors that greeted visitors to steamboat saloons and hotel and theatre lobbies. The hallmark of Jacksonian America seemed to be a beastly indifference to manners, the symptom of a society where consideration to others was a poor second to the immediate satisfaction of personal wants.

The conduct of Americans at dinner said it all. They wolfed down their food, cramming corn bread into their sloppy maws during meals that were devoured in silence, punctuated only by slurps, grunts, scraping knives, and hacking coughs. (All

those cigars.) At the Plate House, in the business district of New York, the naval captain and travel writer Basil Hall was astonished by the speed at which the corned beef arrived and then by the even greater speed at which it was demolished: “We were not in the house above twenty minutes, but we sat out two sets of company at least.” Only the boy waiters yelling orders at the kitchen broke the quiet. The lack of polite conversation suggested the melancholy and dispiriting monotony of American life, on which almost all the early reporters commented. Tocqueville explained the apparent paradox of anxiety amid prosperity as the result of the relentless obligation to be forever Up and Doing.

The European commentators’ dismay at the tyranny of American materialism was disingenuous, since many of them had come to the United States to repair their tattered fortunes or make new ones. Frances Trollope decided to sojourn in America when a rich uncle did the Trollopes the disservice of marrying late in life and, still worse, begetting an heir. Fanny Wright, whose ardor for America had been relit by the Marquis de Lafayette’s triumphal tour in 1824 and 1825, visited Mrs. Trollope at her expensive rented house at Harrow

Weald, outside London, in 1827 and persuaded her to join her. Wright had bought two thousand acres of land on the Wolf River at Nashoba, Tennessee, with the aim of establishing a communal settlement where slaves would receive the education and practical skills that would fit them for freedom. Mrs. Trollope planned to visit the Nashoba utopia, with three of her five children, and then proceed from Memphis, fifteen miles away, up the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers to the thriving new city of Cincinnati, where she intended to make a smart little bundle.

But Fanny Wright’s settlement turned out to be a cluster of woebegone huts. Plank floors were set only a few feet above sodden mud. The chimney in the hut Mrs. Trollope shared with Wright caught fire several times a day. Instead of a model farm, there were a few slaves who were barely subsisting. Of the all-important school there was no sight and no prospect. Mrs. Trollope, aghast at the filth and the fever-bearing mosquitoes, fled with her children to Cincinnati, which was, alas, an “uninteresting mass of buildings,” where hogs rooted in the streets. Together with the French painter Auguste Hervieu (who had intended to teach at Nashoba), she flung herself

into show business, remodeling a “Western Museum,” which had hitherto been a collection of natural curiosities and patriotic waxworks. Her son Henry became the Invisible Girl, booming prophecies in creepy darkness, and, with the help of glass transparencies, she created a vision of the Infernal Regions, featuring frozen lakes with erupting fountains of flame, and electric shocks should the customers, peering through grates, try and touch the exhibits.

Mrs. Trollope’s next venture, a galleried, gaslit emporium of consumer wonders, stocked with fancy goods supplied from Harrow by her husband, ended in debt practically before it began. Mrs. Trollope was not quite prepared to admit defeat, but one of her children was seriously ill, and she decided that they had to return to



“I know the D train would have been faster, brainiac, but the B has a quiet authority.”

England. She stopped in Washington, then spent five months with a hospitable friend in Stonington, Maryland. There, filling notebooks with a tart, vivid account of her experiences, Frances Trollope took a genteel revenge on the land that had betrayed her. "As I declare the country to be fair to the eye and most richly teeming with the gifts of plenty, I am led to ask myself why it is that I do not like it," she wrote. She is struck by the fact that servants call themselves "help," and bewildered that so many thousands of young women would rather toil "half-naked" in factories than seek to enter domestic service. When a Cincinnati neighbor, "whose appearance more resembled a Covent Garden market-woman than any thing else," made the mistake of taking her arm and walking her about, "questioning me without ceasing," Mrs. Trollope noted that, while democracy was very fine in principle, "it will be found less palatable when it presents itself in the shape of a hard greasy paw and is claimed in accents that breathe less of freedom than onions and whiskey."

"Domestic Manners of the Americans" made Frances Trollope, at the age of fifty-two, a sudden literary reputation and two hundred and fifty pounds from the first edition. Her book was popular in Britain because it documented the stereotypes of cultural inferiority and boorish materialism that the Old World was avid to have confirmed about the New. Stendhal annotated a copy and concluded that there was indeed a "smell of the shop" about the country. Baudelaire remarked that it was the Belgium of the West. But the book sold equally well in Boston and Baltimore, albeit to scandalized and infuriated readers. "Trollope" soon became a popular shout of abuse in American theatres, and on display in New York was a waxwork of the author in the shape of a goblin.

The wounds inflicted on American self-love by Mrs. Trollope were superficial compared with the deep punctures made by Charles Dickens. In 1842, when Dickens published "American Notes," an account of a visit to the United States, he had a huge American readership. His novels were instant best-sellers here, and many of them—most notably "Nicholas Nickleby" and "Oliver Twist"—had been dramatized on the

popular stage. Despite, or perhaps because of, the unhappiness "American Notes" engendered, fifty thousand copies were sold in a week in the U.S.

Dickens's America is all Yankee repression and Southern stupor. He saw Boston, New York, and Philadelphia through the keyhole of the prison cell and the madhouse. The Tombs, in New York, served as a metaphor for the dark, unforgiving world in which it was situated. And the geographical heart of the country, though not a jail or an asylum, or a reeking warren like the Five Points, was a river of death. Decades before Joseph Conrad steamed his way upstream into the heart of imperial darkness, Dickens, travelling from Cincinnati downstream to Cairo, Illinois (reversing Mrs. Trollope's route), experienced the Mississippi as a septic ooze, a turbid soup of animal and vegetable muck. Cairo lay in the stinking belly of the beast: "The hateful Mississippi circling and eddying before it, and turning off upon its southern course a slimy monster hideous to behold; a hotbed of disease, an ugly sepulchre, a grave uncheered by any gleam of promise: a place without one single quality, in earth or air or water, to commend it: such is this dismal Cairo."

The sense of America as a sink of contamination extended to its society and its institutions. In the Capitol, where Fanny Wright had been flooded with tremulous rapture, Dickens saw "the meanest perversion of virtuous Political Machinery that the worst tools ever wrought"—a clamorous gang of fakes, fools, and tricksters. His habitual outrage extended to the unrepentant practice of slavery in the South, but he never took the North's support for emancipation as evidence of moral uprightness. The North, he wrote in a letter to a friend, hates the Negro quite as heartily as the South, but uses slavery as a pretext for domination.

Many people in the governing circles of both Britain and France were sympathetic to the South, not only because of the threatened interruption of raw-cotton supplies but also because a Confederate victory would preempt the emergence of a gigantic and powerful nation. In November, 1861, when an American warship stopped the British steamer *Trent* to

remove two Confederate agents bound for London and Paris, the ailing Prince Albert had to intervene to restrain British calls for war. According to Philippe Roger, whose "L'Ennemi Américain" (2002) is a brilliant and exhaustive guide to the history of French Ameriphobia, the fate of the South became a sentimental fashion in Napoleon III's Paris.

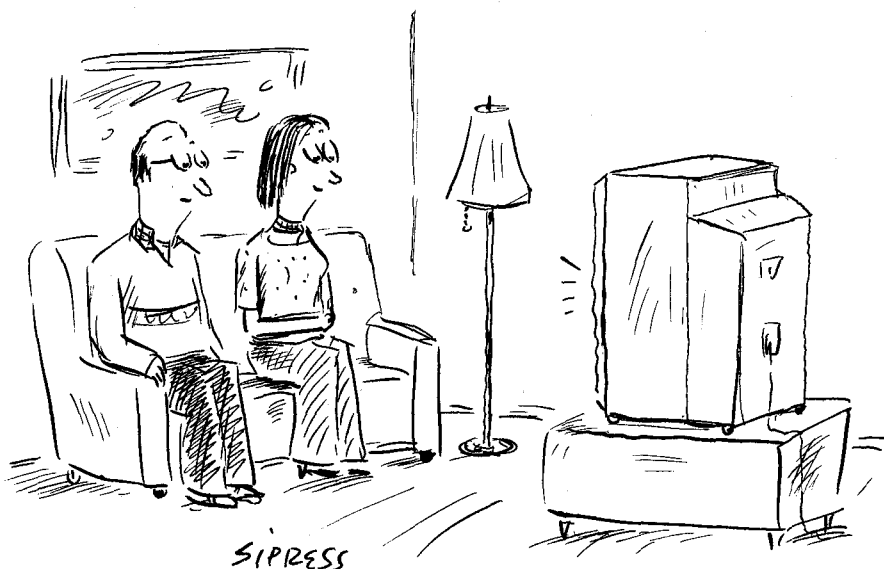
When the American republic failed to break up, the European angst about its economic transformation and territorial expansion became a neurosis. For some time, the British government, worried about the growing imperial rivalry of the new Germany and the French Republic, had complacently assumed that

American expansionism could be manipulated to keep its rivals at bay. If the American fleet would, for its own purposes, prevent European undesirables from straying into the Pacific at no cost to the British taxpayer, jolly good for the Stars and Stripes. The Spanish-American War of 1898, which the French treated as the unmasking of Yankee imperialism, was looked at in London with relaxed tolerance. Rudyard Kipling's lines on "the White Man's burden" were written not in praise of some triumph of the Union Jack beneath far-flung palm and pine but to celebrate the fall of Manila.

Much as he loved the energy of America, Kipling became progressively unhappy the farther east he went. Soot-black, fog-fouled Chicago, its scummy river speckled with rust and grease, was, he thought, an apparition of the American future. He stood on a narrow beam at the Chicago stockyards, looking down on the "railway of death" that carried squealing hogs to an appointment with two lines of butchers. The fact that the stockyards were also a tourist attraction only heightened his stupefaction. Unforgettably, he saw "a young woman of large mold, with brilliantly scarlet lips, and heavy eyebrows . . . dressed in flaming red and black, and her feet . . . were cased in red leather shoes. She stood in a patch of sunlight, the red blood under her shoes, the vivid carcasses tacked round her, a bullock bleeding its life away not six feet away from her, and the death factory roaring all round her."

It is hard to know where fact ends





"This week on 'Celebrity Fear Factor,' contestants are threatened with total anonymity."

and fiction begins in Kipling's "American Notes," but the book's bravura passages established the *idées fixes* of Europeans about the muscular republic on the verge of its imperial awakening: awesomely carnivorous, racially mongrel, and socially polarized, both ethically primitive and technologically advanced. At the turn of the century, that stereotype, along with America's cultural poverty (exceptions were always made for Mark Twain), imprinted itself in the literature of reporters from the Old World. In an age absorbed by the physiology of national types, *Homo americanus* seemed to have evolved for the maximization of physical force. While chewing gum was preferable to chewing tobacco, its ubiquitousness mystified French observers like Jules Huret, until he decided that it was a workout for the overrevolved Yankee jaws and teeth, which needed all the power they could get to tear their way through the slabs of steak consumed at dinner.

Likewise, the appeal of American football—the Harvard-Yale game became almost as much a fixture of foreign itineraries as the stockyards—was explicable only as quasi-Spartan military training. What really startled Europeans was the blood-lust the sport seemed to provoke in spectators. At one Harvard-Yale game, Huret listened in appalled

fascination as a nineteen-year-old yelled "Kill him!" and "Break his neck!" from the bleachers.

Modern anti-Americanism was born of the multiple insecurities of the first decade of the twentieth century. Just as the European empires were reaching their apogee, they were beset by reminders of their own mortality. At Adowa in 1896, the Ethiopians inflicted a crushing defeat on the Italians; in 1905, the Russian Empire was humiliated in war by the Japanese. Britain may have ruled a quarter of the world's population and geographical space, but it failed to impose its will decisively on the South African Boers. And Wilhelm II's Germany, though it was beginning to brandish its own imperial sword, remained fretful about "encirclement." The unstoppable of America's economy and its immigrant-fuelled demographic explosion worried the rulers of these empires, even as they staggered into the fratricidal slaughter that would insure exactly that future.

It was self-evident that France and Britain should have been grateful for the mobilization of American manpower in 1917, which tipped the balance against the Germans and Austrians. Colonel Charles E. Stanton's declaration "Lafayette, we are here," and the subsequent sacrifice of American lives for a European

cause, seemed to herald a restoration of transatlantic good feelings. But, as Philippe Roger (and others, like the historians David Strauss and Jean-Philippe Mathy) explains, if the war created a brief solidarity, the peace more decisively destroyed it. When Woodrow Wilson failed to persuade Congress to ratify the Treaty of Versailles and America withdrew into isolationist self-interest, all the old insecurities and animosities returned. Wilson was perhaps the most detested of all American Presidents by the French, for whom his self-righteousness was compounded by his failure to deliver results.

American generosity (in the French view) toward German reparation schedules fed into the conspiracy theories that seethed and bubbled in the anti-American press in the nineteen-twenties and early thirties. In "The American Cancer," Robert Aron and Arnaud Dandieu went so far as to argue that the First World War had been a plot of American high finance to enslave Europe in a web of permanent debt, a view that was echoed in J.-L. Chastanet's "Uncle Shylock" and in Charles Pomaret's "America's Conquest of Europe." The newspaper *France-Soir* calculated the weight of debt to the United States at seventy-two hundred francs for every French man and woman. Nor was there much in the way of sentimental gratitude for General Pershing's doughboys. Why, it was asked, had the engagement of American troops on the Western Front been delayed until 1918? The answer was that the United States had waited until it could mobilize a force large enough not just to win the war but to dominate the peace.

For French writers like Kadmi-Cohen, the author of "The American Abomination," the threat from United States was not just economic or military. America now posed a social and cultural danger to the civilization of Europe. The greatest "American peril" (a phrase that became commonplace in the literature) was the standardization of social life (the ancestor of today's complaints against globalization), the thinning of the richness of human habits to the point where they could be marketable not only inside America but, because of the global reach of American capitalism, to the entire world. Hollywood movies, which, according to Georges Duhamel, were "an amusement for slaves," and "a pastime

for the illiterate, for poor creatures stupefied by work and anxiety," were the Trojan horse for the Americanization of the world. Jean Baudrillard's belief that the defining characteristic of America is its fabrication of reality was anticipated by Duhamel's polemics against the "shadow world" of the movies, with their reduction of audiences to somnolent zombies sitting in the dark.

The charge that the United States was imposing its cultural habits on the prostrate body of war-torn Europe returned with even more force after 1945. Americans thought of the Marshall Plan (together with the forgiveness of French debts) as an exercise in wise altruism; European leaders like de Gaulle bristled with suspicion at the patronizing weight of the program. Complaints against Coca-Colonization, the mantra of the anti-globalizers, were already in full cry in the nineteen-fifties. But as Arthur Koestler, who bowed to no one in his loathing of "cellophane-wrapped bread, processed towns of cement and glass . . . the Organization Man and the Readers' Digest," put it in 1951, "Who coerced us into buying all this? The United States do not rule Europe as the British ruled India; they waged no Opium War to force their revolting 'Coke' down our throats. Europe bought the whole package because Europe wanted it."

Yet somehow, in the present crisis, American democracy has let itself be represented as American despotism. Some in the European antiwar movement see the whole bundle of American values—consumer capitalism, a free market for information, an open electoral system—as having been imposed rather than chosen. Harold Pinter told peace marchers in London two weeks ago that the United States was a "monster out of control." And while representatives of the Iraqi exile community in Britain narrated stories of the atrocities their families had endured at the hands of Saddam Hussein, banners in Hyde Park equated the Stars and Stripes with the swastika.

These cavils are not necessarily false, just because they've been uttered by Ameriphobes. Fast-food nation was invented in the eighteen-thirties, and Captain Hall's puzzled observation that in America the word "improvement"

seemed to mean "an augmentation in the number of houses and people and above all in the amount of cleared land" has not lost any of its validity with the passing of a hundred and seventy-odd years.

Early on, Europeans identified appetite and impatience as the cardinal American sins. Among the many anxieties of European friends, as well as enemies, of the United States is that Americans are not being told that what lies ahead may be much more testing than a fly-by war and a drive-through peace.

But of all the character flaws that Europeans have ascribed to Americans, nothing has contributed more to widening the Atlantic than national egocentricity (a bit rich, admittedly, coming from the French). Knut Hamsun put the emphatic celebration of separateness down to a lack of education about other places and cultures and commented, perhaps waspishly, "It is almost incredible how hard America works at being a world of its own in the world." Virtuous isolation, of course, wasn't a problem so long as the United States saw the exercise of its power primarily in terms of the defensive policing of its own continental space. But now that policing has gone irreversibly global, the imperious insistence on the American way, or else, has only a limited usefulness in a long-term pacification strategy. Like it or not, help will be needed, given America's notoriously short attention span, intolerance of casualties, and grievously wounded prosperity. Serving the United Nations with notice of redundancy should its policies not replicate those of the United States and the United Kingdom might turn out to be shortsighted, since in Europe, even in countries whose governments have aligned themselves with America, there is almost no support for a war without U.N. sanction. Perhaps Mrs. Trollope put it best after all: "If the citizens of the United States were indeed the devoted patriots they call themselves, they would surely not thus encrust themselves in the hard, dry, stubborn persuasion, that they are the first and best of the human race, that nothing is to be learnt, but what they are able to teach, and that nothing is worth having, which they do not possess." ♦

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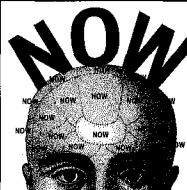
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and more

**AND: A calendar of New Yorker
events across the country**

WHO'S THE CHEF?

BY DAVID SEDARIS

"My boss has a rubber hand," I told our Parisian dinner guests following my one and only day of work. The French word for boss is our word for chef, so it sounded even better than I'd expected. A chef with a rubber hand. You'd think it would melt.

The guests leaned closer to the table, not sure if I was using the right word. "Your *chef*? Since when did you start working?" They turned to Hugh for confirmation. "He has a job?"

Thinking, I guess, that I wouldn't notice, Hugh set down his fork and mouthed the words "It's volunteer work." What irritated me was the manner in which he said it—not outright but barely whispered, the way you might if your three-year-old was going on about his big day at school. "It's day care."

"Volunteer or not, I still had a chef," I said. "And his hand was made of rubber." I'd sat on this information for hours, had even rehearsed its delivery, double-checking all the important words in the dictionary. I don't know what I'd expected—but it definitely wasn't this.

"I'm sure it wasn't actual rubber," Hugh said. "It was probably some kind of plastic."

The friends agreed, but they hadn't seen my chef, hadn't watched as he thoughtlessly wedged a pencil between his man-made fingers. A plastic hand wouldn't have given quite so easily. A plastic hand would have made a different sound against the tabletop. "I know what I saw," I said. "It was rubber and it smelled like a pencil eraser."

If someone told me that his boss's hand smelled like a pencil eraser, I'd shut up and go with it, but Hugh was in one of his moods. "What, this guy let you smell his hand?"

"Well, no," I said. "Not exactly."

"O.K., then, it was plastic."

"So, what," I said, "is anything not held directly to your nose made out of plastic? Is that the rule now?" One of our

joint New Year's resolutions was to stop bickering in front of company, but he was making it really hard. "The hand was rubber," I said. "Heavy rubber, like a tire."

"So it was inflatable?" The guests laughed at Hugh's little joke and I took a moment to think the worse of them. An inflatable hand is preposterous and not worth imagining. Couldn't they see that?

"Look," I said. "This wasn't something I saw in a shop. I was right there, in the room with it."

"Fine," Hugh said. "So what else?"

"What do you mean, 'what else'?"

"Your volunteer job. So the boss had an artificial hand—what else?"

Let me explain that it isn't easy finding volunteer work in Paris. The government pays people to do just about everything, especially during an election year, and when I visited the benevolence center the only thing available was a one-day job helping to guide the blind through one of the city's Métro stations. The program was run by my chef, who'd set up a temporary office in a small, windowless room next to the ticket booth. It wasn't my fault that no blind people showed up. "Listen," I said. "I just spent six hours in a storage closet being ignored by a man with a rubber hand. What do you mean, 'what else'? What more do I need?"

The friends stared blankly and I realized I'd been speaking in English.

"In French," Hugh said. "Say it in French."

It was one of those times when you really notice the difference between speaking and expressing yourself. I knew the words—blind people, election year, storage closet—but even when coupled with verbs and pronouns they didn't add up the way I needed them to. In English, my sentences could perform double duty, saying both that I'd reported for volunteer work and that Hugh would

LAURENT CILUFFO

be punished for not listening to the single most interesting thing that had happened to me since moving to Paris.

"Just forget it," I said.

"Suit yourself."

I left the table to get a glass of water, and when I returned Hugh was discussing M. DiBiasio, the plumber he had hired to replace our bathroom sink.

"He's got one arm," I told the guests.

"No, he doesn't," Hugh said. "He's got two."

"Yes, but one of them doesn't work."

"Well, he's still got it," Hugh said.

"It's there. It fills a sleeve."

He's always doing this, contradicting me in front of company. And so I did what I always do, which is ask a question and then deny him a chance to answer.

"Define an arm," I said. "If you're talking about the long, hairy thing that hangs from your shoulder, O.K., he's got two, but if you're talking about a long hairy thing that moves around and actually does shit then he's got one, all right? I should know. I'm the one who carried the sink up three goddam flights of stairs. Me, not you."

The guests were getting uncomfortable, but I didn't care. Technically, Hugh had been right, the plumber had two arms, but we weren't in a courtroom and there was no punishment for a little exaggeration. People like mental pictures; they give them something to do besides just listening. Hadn't we been through this? Instead of backing me up, he'd made me out to be a liar, and, oh, I hated him for that.

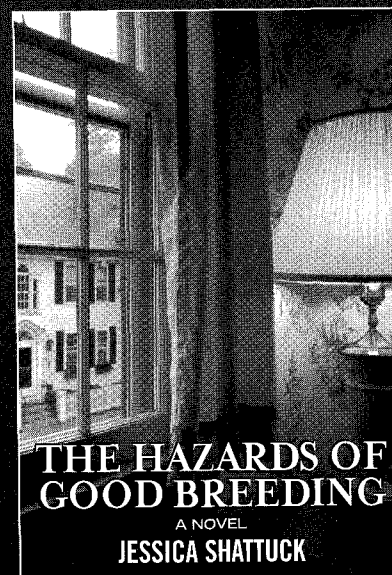


Once he'd destroyed my credibility with the one-armed plumber, it was pretty much over as far as the rubber hand was concerned. The guests weren't even thinking plastic anymore, they were thinking actual working hand, made of flesh and bone and muscle. The mental picture had been erased and they would never understand that a hand is defined by its movement rather than by its shape. The chef's had fingernails, creases—you probably could have read the palms—but it was pink and stiffish, like a false hand you might use when teaching a dangerous animal to shake. I don't know how it attached or where, but I'm fairly certain that he could take it off without too much trouble. While we were sitting there, just the two of us, waiting for blind people who never showed, I imagined how the hand might look positioned on a bedside table, if that was where he kept it. There was probably no point in wearing it to bed. The thing wasn't helpful in any way; the fingers didn't open and close. It was just a deception, like a hairpiece or a false eyelash.

The dinner conversation staggered on, but the evening was already shot. Anyone could see that. In another few minutes, the guests would look at their watches and say something about their babysitter. Coats would be retrieved and we'd stand in the hallway saying goodbye again and again as they made their way down the stairs. I would clear the table and Hugh would do the dishes, neither of us speaking and both of us wondering if this just might be the one to do it. "I hear you guys broke up over a plastic hand," people would say, and my rage would renew itself. The argument would continue until one of us died, and even then it would manage to wage on. If I went first, my tombstone would read, "It Was Rubber." He'd likely take the adjacent plot and buy a larger tombstone reading, "No, It Was Plastic."

Dead or alive, I'd have no peace, and so I let it go, the way you have to when you're totally dependent on somebody. In the coming weeks, I'd picture the hand waving goodbye or shooting into the air to hail a taxi—going about its little business as I went about mine. Hugh would ask why I was smiling and I'd say, "Oh, no reason," and leave it at that. ♦

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TEEN SPIRIT

Capitalizing on the rise of post-Soviet youth.

BY GARY SHTEYNGART

In the late nineteen-eighties, I was sent to Stuyvesant High School, in Manhattan, a magnet school specializing in math and the sciences that was also a kind of holding pen for multinational nerds. The majority of us were immigrants or the children of immigrants, although a good number of sweet native-born kids from the Upper West Side were on hand to teach us about the right music and the proper drugs. Despite their best efforts, our outsiders' angst often found its expression in the Eurotrash New Wave tunes of a Long Island radio station called WLIR (later renamed WDRE), broadcasting from deep in the suburban interior of Garden City. We—and by “we” I mean pimply young Russians, Koreans, Chinese, Indians—were lost between two worlds. We went to school in Manhattan, but we lived in Flushing, Jackson Heights, Midwood, and Bayside, and couldn't resist WLIR, that clarion call of squeaky synthesizer music, and the narcoleptic Goth outfits and the spiky hair that went with it. The usual British suspects ruled the airwaves: Depeche Mode, Erasure (their bittersweet hit “Oh l'Amour” was an inspiration to the loveless), and, of course, the Smiths, the princes of the gelled-hair set, best known for their moody anthem “How Soon Is Now?”

Recently I heard a remake of this New Wave classic, sung not by a quartet of disenchanted Mancunian lads but by two Russian girls with high-pitched voices that screeched from my stereo speakers:

You shaht your maus,
how ken you say
I go about sings ze wrong vay?
I am hyooman and I need to be lavd
just like everybody else daz.

The sentiment is still there—banal, adolescent, and irresistible. (Who among us isn't *hyooman* and doesn't want to be *lavd*?) The girls behind the accents are Julia Volkova, a short, dark-haired eighteen-year-old with enormous eyes and a brash manner, and Lena Katina, a

redhead, who is also eighteen. Their band is called Tatu (styled t.A.T.u. for the Western market). The girls sing of teen-age lesbian love, and when they encounter cameras and reporters they kiss each other with abandon. Tatu's “200 km/h in the Wrong Lane” has recently been released in the United States, on the Interscope label (the home of artists such

to conquer America and the West, instead of the other way around. I could have used Tatu back in my adolescence.

I was born in Leningrad, in 1972. My brief tenure as a Soviet pre-adolescent was memorable. Whatever daily evils befell adults in the Brezhnev era, the regime was good for a child's imagination. Bereft of anything resembling Western popular culture (the jokes that there were nightly farm reports on television were accurate), I turned inward and experienced what I believe was my most fertile creative period. I fell in love with the Red Army and all things Socialist. I dreamed of Lenin and the little hut he supposedly built single-handedly while hiding from the Tsar's police, and I wrote my first novel, a fairy



How did the music of a lesbian-wannabe girl group become a top export?

as Eminem), making the band one of the first Russian pop acts to be exported to the West. Their single “All the Things She Said” is climbing the American charts, having already hit the No. 1 spot in Britain, where the Tatu girls' antics have caused a public outcry. It is a remarkable turn of events for Russia's fledgling music industry: Russian teen-agers sent

tale about the great bald leader, which was set on the planet Andromeda. I quizzed my father, an engineer, about the relative merits of Soviet-made Tupolev planes versus the hated American Boeings, and then raced a pair of clothespins—a red Tupolev and a blue Boeing—always letting the Tupolev win.

We moved to Rome when I was six,

ISTVAN BANYAI

having joined the exodus of Soviet Jews seeking a less gray, more remunerative life in the West (not to mention a respite from Russia's anti-Semitism). It was there, while awaiting our papers for resettlement in the United States, that my father told me it was all a lie—Lenin, his hand-made hut, the nightly farm reports, the Soviet Union itself. I was six years old, and he broke my heart. And yet, at that tender age, I already had one of the immigrant's most valuable skills: the ability to adjust my values and shed unnecessary beliefs at will. In my daily clothespin race, I let the Boeing win.

I returned to St. Petersburg twenty years later, in 1999. I was expecting a somewhat shabbier version of Prague, where I had studied while in college. Instead, I learned that the Cold War, like any war, must have a loser. From my window, as the plane approached the Petersburg airport, I saw defeat on the ground: deserted suburban fields, the shell of a derelict factory, a clutch of decaying apartment houses that even from three hundred yards in the air looked as if they should be condemned. There was defeat on the faces of the adolescent-looking men toting machine guns who guarded the dilapidated international terminal. Defeat at passport control. Defeat at customs. At the curbside, defeat in the line of sad men with battered Ladas begging to ferry us into town for hard currency.

It was the end of the Yeltsin era, when the President's drinking bouts vied for the front page with accounts of spectacular acts of urban violence. Oligarchs such as Boris Berezovsky and Vladimir Gusinsky had the backroom power, and the economy was still reeling after the near-collapse of the banking sector the previous year.

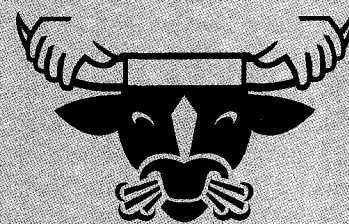
During my visit, I learned that my exit visa was incomplete without a certain stamp. I found myself in the neighborhood where I had lived as a child, in the middle of Moskovskaya Plushchad—an ugly square boxed in by gargantuan Stalin-era buildings—having a panic attack that nearly brought me to my knees. I was waiting for a woman from a questionable visa service to show up so that I could bribe a hotel clerk with a thousand rubles (about forty dollars at the time) to have my visa properly stamped. My panic was an echo of my parents' fear twenty years earlier: the fear of being refused per-

mission to emigrate, of becoming what was then called a *refusenik* (a designation that brought with it a kind of jobless state-sanctioned purgatory). Part of me believed that I would not be allowed to leave Russia, that I would be stuck here—in an endless concrete square teeming with unhappy, aggressive people in awful leather jackets—for the rest of my life.

Later, brooding over the useless bureaucratic procedure and the money I had paid the hotel clerk, I kept mumbling to a Russian friend, "What for?" But what I really meant to ask was: How can anyone live like this? My friend did not understand. This was the only life he knew.

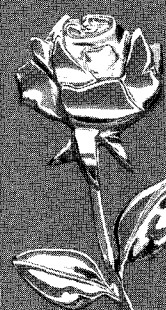
Last summer, three years after that visit, I went back again. The country's economy, buoyed by high oil prices, was on the rebound. Vladimir Putin, a former lieutenant-colonel in the K.G.B. and nominally a Westernizer, has tried to reform the country, with mixed results: he cracked down on the highly criminalized oligarchy and simultaneously dismembered the independent media. The war against rebels in the Chechen Republic continued, although in the summer of 2002 that intractable conflict rarely led the newscasts. I was eager to see St. Petersburg on the eve of its three-hundredth anniversary, being celebrated this year. In Moscow, I planned to meet Vladimir Sorokin, whose novel "Goluboye Salo" is one of the most inventive works by a Russian since the collapse of Communism. And I had decided to seek out Tatu. I wanted to see if Russia was producing something new and worthwhile, sending out talent to the greater world along with its usual exports of raw materials and laundered money.

When I arrived in Moscow on the first day of August, the city was under the heaviest haze it had seen in thirty years, the result of fires in the surrounding peat bogs. The capital, with its goofy Soviet cars and apocalyptic Stalinist architecture, looked like "Blade Runner" on a budget, and seemed to be sliding out of time, on the way to someplace not too pleasant, yet thoroughly its own. The growth of Russia's economy, such as it is, is concentrated almost entirely in the four hundred square miles occupied by the city of Moscow, where more than four-fifths of Russia's financial resources, as well as



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much foreign investment, is based. Yet, a sleek Ikea, huddled beneath a low-rise skyline of Soviet apartment blocks, is surrounded by signs directing less fortunate shoppers to the House of Romanian Furniture. The average Russian pension was recently raised, with much fanfare, to about fifty dollars a month.

Thumbing through a popular magazine, I saw an advertisement for a gargantuan complex called the Triumph Palace. With a tall spire and porticoes hoisted some thirty floors into the sky, it is a fine illustration of what would happen if the Parthenon crashed into the Empire State Building. According to the ad, when not splashing in the "aquapark," gazing out from the "panoramic restaurant," or yelling at the "polite concierge," captains of industry will feel safe behind armored doors in flats finished with expensive woods. "Built on the finest traditions of the past. Headed for the future" is the building's motto. The present remains conspicuously absent, as if it had been tucked away somewhere between the indoor car wash and the rollerblading trail.

On my second day in the city, I was sitting in an Indian restaurant, being served by a very pale Slavic boy in a shalwar kameez. Behind me, a young Russian woman in a tasteful miniskirt and a tight orange T-shirt was talking, in English, with a European man. "You've *never* been to India?" the woman said, shocked at her companion's provincialism. When the gentleman mistakenly suggested that the Taj Mahal was made of white gold, the silence lasted long enough for me to finish my dessert of *gulab jamun*. I felt sorry for the poor fellow. It is easy to make a faux pas in Moscow. After years of listening to the wrong music, eating the wrong food, and wearing the wrong clothes, middle-class Muscovites are obsessed with *pravilnost*, or correctness. Practically across the street from the old K.G.B. headquarters at Lubyanka Square, little wooden boats bearing sushi sailed by on a current of water in Sushi Vesla (Sushi Oars) as insipid global reggae played over the speaker. A couple of correct girls with jet-black hair listlessly watched the plasma-screen TV, which showed a fashion show in São Paulo. Sushi floating about on wooden boats? *So* last year.

Moscow reminded me of an insecure immigrant. Whether backpacking

THAT BAD COLD

That hand, a tiny one, first at my throat;
That thump in the chest.
I know you of old, you're a bad cold
Come to stay for a few days,
Unwanted visitor—a week perhaps.

Nobody asked him to come. (Yes,
He is masculine, but otherwise
Don't try to parse the situation.)
Everything stops. Perhaps
He is providentially intended to
Make cease and desist an overworking
State of mind. Yes, there is a certain
Respite. Friends mean merely a bed
And a hot drink. Enemies and all
Paranoias, however justified, lose their way
In the fog. And the desk diary
Lies open with a vacant grin.

—Muriel Spark

through India or rollerblading through a monstrous apartment complex, elite Moscow latches on to different trends with total commitment, yet doesn't quite get them right. Or, worse, it gets them too right, like a rich suburban boy who's constantly trading in his sneakers for newer ones.

Yet no one can accuse two giddy teen-age would-be lesbians of following the herd. One of the most debilitating aspects of the New Russia is its popular music, a great deal of which sounds like the soundtrack for a mandatory calisthenics workout. By contrast, Tatu's songs, and their videos—which are played frequently on MTV Russia and are now getting airplay on music channels across Western Europe and the United States—are extreme, if in a clumsy, heartfelt way. In the video that established them, "Ya Soshla S Uma" ("I Have Lost My Mind," released in English as "All the Things She Said"), the singers, dressed in school uniforms, smooch and caress behind a chain-link fence topped with barbed wire (and beneath a torrent of sexy rain) while shocked older Russians look on. In another, Julia packs sticks of dynamite to blow up the half-naked Lena for kissing a boy on a carousel while curious

kindergartners watch. In a third, the lovelorn girls hijack a truck at the airport and knock down an innocent road worker. The girls are most proud of their new video, "Prostye Dvizheniya" ("Simple Motions"), in which Julia is supposed to be masturbating with Lena in mind, although all you see is her contorted face. She looks like a wounded otter.

The offices of Tatu's production company are a few blocks from Moscow's expensive main thoroughfare, Tverskaya. I expected a Slavic pheromone factory, but instead found an average office filled with dull Western furniture, the kind of place that takes up most of Moscow's prime real estate. Instead of the knee socks and children's underwear the girls wear onstage, Julia was dressed in modest Daisy Duke cutoffs, and Lena, the redhead, was snug in bell-bottoms and a simple red sweater.

The band's manager, producer, and founder is a former child psychiatrist named Ivan Shapovalov, who quit the medical field because he couldn't keep from yawning whenever a patient entered his office. Shapovalov was working as a copywriter in Russia's nascent advertising industry when he was struck by the idea of a teen-age girl band with sexual overtones. Julia and Lena were picked out of five hundred hopefuls at a casting call in 1999.

I was interviewing Shapovalov in his office when the boisterous Tatu girls burst in, shouting, in Russian, "We're Tatu!" Shapovalov, who is thirty-six, hardly seems the Svengali the Russian press has made him out to be, and he gently shooed them away. "Girls, behave yourselves!" he said. He appeared less a Russian music producer than a jittery, soft-spoken grad student in American studies. (He'd taken film-directing courses at U.C.L.A., but found them second-rate, he told me.) He talked like a grad student, too, attributing Tatu's success to the "dramatic emptiness of Western images."

"Why are Western images empty in a dramatic context?" he asked, fidgeting in his chair. "The source of drama is where life and death exist in proximity. In Russia they are closer to one another. Drama can be based only on absolute categories, which we cannot doubt. These are life, death, and love. Although love is also a fraud. So really what we have is life and death."

But what I really wanted to know was how a former child psychologist put together a popular duo based on the twin taboos of homosexuality and children's sexuality, and launched one of the first pop acts in Russia's history to be exported to the West.

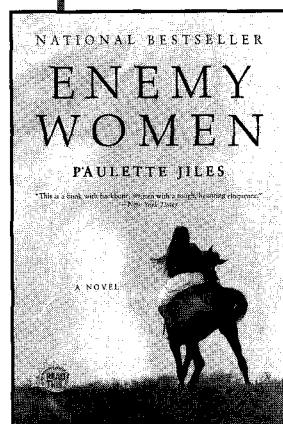
"Because of my advertising past, I've made no branding mistakes," Shapovalov said, in the serene but assured tone of someone who, because of his advertising past, has made no branding mistakes. "And all the ideas were generated by one person. I shot the video clips, I thought up the ideas for the songs. There were no mistakes because it was all done by the same vision." He said the last word, "vision," in English.

When I asked how he chose Julia and Lena, Shapovalov revealed his formula: "Lena has a voice. And Julia had a sexual energy. It was impossible not to feel it. She had wild sexual energy." We looked at each other closely.

"Tatu is the result of historical processes," Shapovalov informed me.

Julia and Lena are middle class and, shielded from Russia's poverty and free-fall moral climate, in some ways seem oddly virginal. Contrary to rumors that they share a love nest, the girls live with their parents when they're not on tour. Lena is studying psychology by correspondence at a Moscow university, be-

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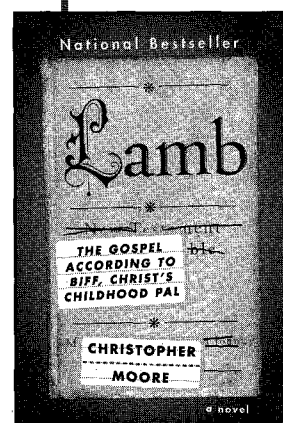
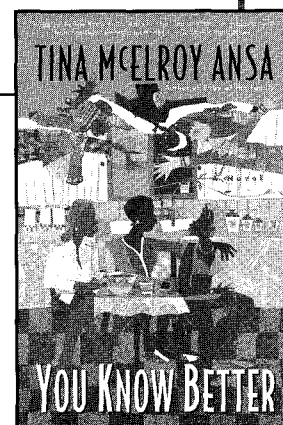
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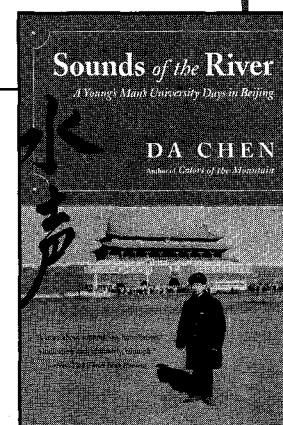
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cause, she says, she wants "something to fall back on." Both have had musical training, and have sung in another band. Despite their occasional hand-holding and desultory cheek-pecking, they look as if they could have been good Young Pioneers.

"We had a good childhood!" they insisted, almost in unison.

"We did everything," Lena said, speaking in the serious, careful way that educated Russian girls do. "Music. Mountain sports. Tennis. Swimming. Figure skating. Ballroom dancing."

My attempts to steer the conversation toward the topic of their unquenchable homosexuality met a kind of bland resistance.

Is it true, Julia, you were kicked out of the children's band Neposedy—

JULIA (*bored*): For corrupting the band members.

So it happened?

JULIA (*bored*): Yes. I corrupted . . . I corrupted Lena.

LENA (*with mild enthusiasm*): She corrupted me. She corrupted me and now look what's become of me.

I brought up rumors in the Russian press about Julia and Lena getting married in an underwater ceremony in Amsterdam.

"They're giving us an idea," Julia said.

"It's good P.R.," I said.

"It's cheap P.R.," Shapovalov said. "Marriage, lesbianism," he added, his tone dismissive. "There's a relationship here, and there are real emotions. I've always thought of it as a friendship that grew into love. That happens a lot between girls. Not between boys. It doesn't mean they're lesbians."

A few weeks later, I met the girls in New York, where they were doing publicity. I had played Tatu's new English-language record for some friends at a dinner party in Fort Greene, Brooklyn. "They sound like chipmunks," one said. Well, yes. Perhaps. But glorious chipmunks. The girls may not be pop geniuses, like OutKast, or verbal stylists, like Eminem, but, despite the techno-enhanced quality of their music, they are able to communicate the loneliness and insecurity of youth.

Julia and Lena looked tired and unhappy, even in the opulence of an expensive midtown restaurant. Julia was

skeptical of the image strategy that their new handlers at Interscope had in mind for them. "The Americans want us to sound smart. We're two little girls and we have to remain little girls, not be grown women," she told me.

"My pussy hurts," Lena said, perhaps summing up their travails abroad.

At one point when we were talking in Moscow, the girls had asked me if I regretted leaving Russia.

"It's a difficult question," I said, taken aback. No young Russian had ever suggested to me that leaving the country before the catastrophe of the past decade had been a mistake. "The situation here is awful."

"Look at all the writers who've emigrated to other countries and died there from grief," Lena reminded me.

"We're patriots," Julia said. "America is nice, but our soul is in Moscow."

Julia and Lena have a gift that I could scarcely have imagined, growing up—a gift for donning Daisy Duke shorts and yet remaining utterly non-American.

Before I flew to Russia, I trimmed my goatee drastically. I'm dark in appearance, especially by comparison with most Slavic Russians, and I catch the eye of policemen. Russians attribute most crime in their cities to people from the Caucasus (particularly Chechnya but also Georgia, Azerbaijan, and other southern regions), and police in Moscow and elsewhere routinely stop Chechens and other dark-skinned people, check their documents, and, regardless of whether the papers are in order or not, extract a bribe. A Jewish friend in St. Petersburg had grown a beard, only to be stopped on every corner by the cops, who would shout, "Eh, Shamil!" referring to Shamil Basayev, a Chechen warlord. "Your documents!"

A few days into my trip, I was stopped not far from the Kremlin by two policemen, who demanded my papers. One looked hopeful at the sight of my American passport and nudged his partner—

extorting bribes from Westerners is another lucrative sideline. I quickly started to speak in Russian as the policemen checked the stamps on my visa and then glumly sent me on my way.

I retired to the Chinese Pilot Djao-Da tavern, where the bar is made from the wing of an airplane, to read the newspapers and drink beer. Once again, Vladimir Sorokin was in the news. Tatu's celebration of teen-age lust—the girls sing an impassioned four-minute paean to a vibrator—has not inspired much protest in Russia, but Sorokin, one of the country's most respected writers, has recently become the subject of a pornography lawsuit.

Sorokin's novel "Goluboye Salo" can be translated either as "Gay Lard" or "Blue Lard" ("blue" is Russian slang for gay). The book, which describes a dream of Stalin's, is set in the Stalin years as well as in the distant future, when Russia has fallen under the influence of China. Sorokin has invented a language that combines Russian and Chinese with traces of English and German (a glossary is provided at the back of the book). The plot, such as it is, centers vaguely on the blue lard of the title, a mysterious substance that is culled from the bodies of replicants of Russian literary heroes. They have names like Akhmatova-1 and Pasternak-3. The highly valuable blue lard is produced when the literary clones start writing new work, and the novel's most ingenious passages are parodies of such stalwarts as Tolstoy and Nabokov. A number of loosely related sketches, including a play that lampoons the age-old obsession with Jewish ritual murder and a scene of the Bolshoi Theatre drowning in fecal matter, allow Sorokin to take down Russian culture high and low.

Although there's enough sodomy in Sorokin's work to fill a world-class bathhouse, the lawsuit focusses on one very detailed lovemaking scene between clones of Khrushchev and Stalin (the latter tall and handsome in this looking-glass version of history). Perhaps what angers many is that in Sorokin's vast and sordid imagination it is Khrushchev who mounts Stalin and not the other way around.

The lawsuit was filed by a member of a group called Moving Together, a new patriotic movement for teens, which brings to mind the kitsch and fervor of the Soviet Union's Komsomol youth



league. The new version, keen to avoid the mistakes of the twentieth century, handily condemns both Communism and Fascism, although the whole enterprise is built around a personality cult devoted to Putin, in much the same way that the Komsomol was devoted to Lenin. The young people of Moving Together are perhaps best known for their T-shirts, which feature the President's childish face contorted into an epic shit-eating grin. Their slogan is "*Vsyo Putyom*," which means "Everything is going the right way"; it is also a play on the name Putin.

According to press reports, members of Moving Together get free English-language instruction, admission to local swimming pools and sports clubs, and free access to the Internet at some cafés. Many suspect that Moving Together is bankrolled by the administration, although no direct links between the Putin government and his well-behaved teen-age followers have come to light. A figure of eighty thousand members nationwide has appeared in the press, and one Kremlin rally drew an estimated eleven thousand.

Moving Together's previous initiatives included a demonstration in support of a new labor code—a topic too dull to excite anyone—and an impassioned protest against banning Portuguese-style bull-fights in Moscow, which was just too weird to draw much support. In attacking Sorokin, Moving Together has finally found a target worthy of public attention. Decrying the smutty state of Russian literature, the group began a book swap in which Sorokin's books were to be exchanged for the works of less scatological and less narcotics-friendly writers such as Chekhov. Sorokin's work was thrown into a giant toilet bowl outside the Bolshoi Theatre, to protest his having been asked to write a libretto for that august institution. After the much-hyped public flushing, and the announcement of the lawsuit, weekly sales of "*Goluboye Salo*" increased almost sevenfold.

Whether or not Moving Together is linked with Vladimir Putin, its ideals and agenda are remarkably similar to his. Both want to erase Soviet history and integrate Russia with the West, yet both pursue distinctly Soviet methods—censorship and the curtailment of free speech—to advance their goals. The gov-



ernment tramples the media's independence, particularly when its campaign in Chechnya is criticized on television or in print. (The war has been Putin's obsession since taking office.) At the same time, the administration is trying to revive the power of patriotism, which has been on a decline since the Soviet Union's collapse, partly because Russia has yet to settle on a post-imperial identity for itself. Is the country a regional power? A superpower-in-waiting? Or just a rapidly deindustrializing Third World behemoth? The writer Victor Plevin—whose work was also on Moving Together's list of verboten books—has called Russia "a banana republic that imported its bananas from Finland."

Before I met Sorokin, I went to see Masha Lipman, then the deputy editor of Moscow's liberal *Weekly Magazine*, who had essentially been forced out of her previous job at a magazine called *Itogi*, together with the entire staff, when the magazine changed ownership under heavy government pressure. At 3 P.M., the offices of the *Weekly Magazine* were crowded with journalists, drinking a Lithuanian vodka clearly not meant for export; instead of the traditional *zakuski* of rye bread and cucumbers, they were chasing it with Chicken McNuggets. I

was introduced to Lev Rubinshtein, a respected avant-garde poet. An energetic, grizzled little fellow in black jeans and a T-shirt, he described the Sorokin affair as "repression lite," explaining that after the tumult of the Yeltsin years Russia is entering a stage of "velvet stagnation." Lipman, a trim woman in her forties, told me that she thought Moving Together's leadership had misjudged what the public wanted. Worse, they had misjudged what the administration wanted. Sorokin's novel, she said, is no threat to Putin, and she predicted that nothing would come of the lawsuit. What disturbed her more was the tenor of the movement, with its Soviet overtones of Great Leader-worship and blind obedience.

Moving Together later sponsored a "For the Last Time" rally near Lenin's Mausoleum, in Red Square. The idea was to take one last spin around Lenin's resting place and then move on, closing that pesky seventy-year-long chapter in Russian history. The kids at the rally were given brochures about Lenin's reign of terror, including lists of famous writers, scientists, and philosophers who were forced to leave the country. "These real figures taken from historical literature will help young people realize Lenin's

true role in the country's history," Vasily Yakemenko, Moving Together's leader, said. He failed to point out that his young followers are proudly continuing the Soviet Union's tradition of hounding writers and other uncoöperative citizens by less than subtle means. The difference between the nineteen-twenties and today is mainly one of effectiveness. Unlike his predecessors in Lenin's day, Sorokin isn't going anywhere.

On the way out of the magazine's offices, Lipman told me to be wary of Paratroopers Day. The city was full of drunken belligerents in blue-and-white striped uniforms, stumbling through the metro and crawling down the street. The paratroopers had started a major fracas with an Azeri fruit seller, and by the time the holiday was over they had accidentally killed one of their own with a grenade launcher in St. Petersburg, nearly drowned several of their members in a fountain in Moscow's Park of Culture, and given a rousing sing-along to Prodigy's "Smack My Bitch Up" at a local airfield. I walked past Moscow's new office buildings, ugly takes on neo-classical motifs, as madly inebriated paratroopers passed by, on their way home, I hoped, to a comfortable couch from the House of Romanian Furniture.

Vladimir Sorokin lives in a quiet neighborhood in southwest Moscow. Nearby, the bar-restaurant-discothèque-billiard club Niagara promises all sorts of recreation. Sorokin's Khrushchev-era building flanks a Stalin-era mathematics school, but both are overshadowed by the neighborhood's newcomer: a residential mini-skyscraper, a monstrous study in concrete, that makes the school look quaint. Sorokin is in his mid-forties, and has a broad face, soft eyes, and a chin that ends in a soul patch. He is not a small man, and, dressed in a T-shirt and beach shorts, he lumbers around like the kind of peaceful, intelligent animal that could grace Canadian currency. He autographs his book with the Chinese characters for Godspeed. He admires the English writer J. G. Ballard. And he has the habit of phrasing his statements in the form of a question by adding an interrogative "yes" at the end. "Literature is a text, yes?"

Sorokin is much in demand. His cell phone rang in the middle of our conversation, and he said, rather tersely, into the phone, "Understand, I don't want to be filmed a second time."

Sorokin doesn't see the humor in a bunch of kids in Putin T-shirts throwing his works into a giant toilet bowl. "It's black P.R.," he complained in a measured but injured tone, comparing Moving Together to Hitler's Storm Troopers. "I can't remember the last time books were destroyed in Moscow. Even in the Stalin era and during the revolution they didn't do this. They killed people, but treated books well." Sorokin paced his study, summoning great reserves of disgruntlement.

He cheered up a little when he recalled how many young people had brought a biography of Putin to dispose of at the Moving Together book swap instead of his own novel.

He does not believe that literature can be considered pornography. "There is no universal way to describe the sex organ and the sex act," he said. "One person can read such a novel and he'll get hard, yes?" Sorokin clenched his fist in demonstration. "But nine others will read it and say, 'Oh, such boredom.'"

Yet Sorokin was cautiously optimistic about the future. "There has been a literary renaissance in the past few years," he told me, and then proposed his theory of Russian literature, which, I warn you, involves a bear metaphor: "The Russian bear is big and mostly asleep. He awakes only during revolution, wars, perestroika, and so on, then he goes back to sleep. When he wakes up, he doesn't need literature, and there have been no good novels written in these times. But when this bear goes to sleep he sees dreams—and that is Russian literature."

I tried to picture a Russian literary bear asleep, but, of course, saw only the amiable Sorokin himself.

"So you think the bear has gone to sleep now?" I asked.

"Yes. Putin has come and put everyone to sleep," Sorokin said.

Russia's instability doesn't worry Sorokin as much as it worries the West. He considers it one of the country's greatest riches, along with its vastness and its snow. "We either remember the

past or hope for the future. There is no present in Russia. A Western person cannot understand this," Sorokin said. "Russians are used to it."

Applying Sorokin's formulation to Russia's two main cities, one could say that Moscow hopes for the future while St. Petersburg remembers the past. Russia's imperial capital is a city living off the memory and grandeur of the distant tsarist era. There is a restaurant in Petersburg named 1913—the last good year in the city's history. St. Petersburg, a.k.a. Leningrad, a.k.a. Petrograd, is its old ruined self, a city that was brought to its knees first by war, then by neglect.

The city was preparing for its three-hundredth anniversary when I arrived, and the usual Potemkin Village syndrome was in evidence. The buildings around Nevsky Prospekt, the grand shopping street, and a few notable landmarks had been banged into shape, while all around the city continued to rot. A walk along the Griboedov Canal, less than a block from Nevsky, revealed decrepit former palaces that had taken a historical thrashing and, as a final indignity, been put to use for dubious enterprises such as the Panda billiard hall. The ascent of Putin, a native son of Petersburg, has elevated many Petersburgers to positions of power in Moscow, but the effect of his Presidency on their city, beyond the erection of luxury *taun khauses* for the new élite and the ongoing restoration of an old imperial palace to be used as Putin's guesthouse (the project's cost is estimated at a hundred and seventy million dollars), has been slight. Large sums of money have been dedicated for the city's resurrection, but there are rumors, as always, of corrupt officials and disappearing funds.

I met a friend, Kostya, at the Mountain Eagle, a Georgian restaurant. We ate succulent pork kebabs and talked about friends who have left for better worlds, such as Washington, D.C., or a Baptist missionary group. Kostya, who is a graduate of St. Petersburg State University, one of the two best universities in the country, earns around three hundred dollars a month as a *yurist*—a kind of junior lawyer. After we had eaten, we wandered off to an ad-hoc karaoke-and-booze shack in the shadow of Peters-



burg's oppressive zoo. We met a gaggle of militant young people, ranging in age from about fifteen to thirty-five. All were poorly dressed proletarian youth, many had bad teeth, and everyone was drunk. Kostya kept a watchful eye on the situation while the young people turned on me, assailing the United States and revelling in the attacks of September 11th and the fact that America is not as strong as it would appear. "The problem with America is that you would not die for your piece of land," a philosophical fifteen-year-old told me.

"But what has this land done for you?" I asked him, pointing at the wilted karaoke shack and the generally disagreeable surroundings. "Everything is shit. There's no future."

"Doesn't matter if it's shit," the kid said. "I would still die for it."

It was too humid to argue, and Kostya and I adjourned to a former bomb shelter that now houses the Fashionable Club Griboedov. Most of the boys at the Griboedov were rich enough to avoid military service—by student deferment, for example, or by outright bribery of the appropriate officials. The war in Chechnya might as well have been happening in a different country. The working class is universally conscripted. In 1999, I met a young man from Buryatia, a region that borders on Mongolia. He had just returned from service in Chechnya, where a friend, a fellow-Buryat, had been killed during a heated card game with other soldiers; the commander of his unit had signed a form that listed the cause of death as enemy fire. The young man I met drank until early morning, passed out for a few minutes, then went out for more vodka. "Men!" he kept imploring us, his eyes wet and red-rimmed. "Men, we have to drink!"

At the Griboedov it was retro night, and we took to the dance floor. "Tatu?" a young woman shouted when I told her what had brought me to Russia. "They're awful!" In contrast to the Eurotrash look of Moscow, the top-end Piter youth dressed in vintage clothing and had a casual, ruffled-hair look. There was a happy air of unconcern and entitlement, the kind that permeated downtown Manhattan bars during the dot-com craze of the late nineties. The setting of a bomb shelter, far below the pockmarked streets of the broken city, was appropriate. No

one here seemed to care much about Russia's future; for these children of Petersburg's wealthy, the future had already been decided in their favor.

On my last night in Russia, Kostya and I went to a karaoke bar in the center of Petersburg with some girls we had met at a party. We sang Frank Sinatra's "My Way" and Culture Club's "Do You Really Want to Hurt Me." One of our new friends did a passable imitation of Whitney Houston. But the crowd-pleaser was an old Soviet song about Lenin in his youth and the glorious October Revolution. The bar was divided into several rooms; once we had started, instantly we heard the happy voices of our next-door neighbors. We shouted out, practically declaimed, words more familiar to us than any American or Tatu song can ever be, words about a bald and resourceful little man named Lenin:

And we still continue our battle!
And our heart beats fast in our chest!
And Le-eh-nin is so very young!
And nascent October is ahead!

Yes, no doubt it was all a lie—Lenin, his hut, glorious October—but I left the bar giddy and excited, my heart "beating fast in my chest." We Russians, at home and abroad, are not altogether Cold War losers. We are something new and not yet determined. Despite our long history, we seem a surprisingly young nation.

Still, the best part of the New Russia is the fact that you can leave it. You clutch your exit visa, a precarious document stamped silly with hotel-registration and airport stamps. Preparing to board your plane in Petersburg's modest airport—its size is more appropriate for Syracuse than for a city of close to five million—you feel like a character in a Russian novel drowning in a sea of exclamation points and question marks, of extreme emotions and uncertainties. How beautiful! How awful! Such a flattering man! Such an enchanting woman! Do I have hepatitis? Where's my wallet?

Then a Western plane pulls up to the gate to take you away. Petersburg is only an hour's flight from the ultra-modern city of Helsinki, the northeastern bastion of the European Union. You look down at the country beneath you, at the strange shapes of superannuated factories squatting below. And, before you know it, Russia is gone. ♦

BUDAPEST SPA



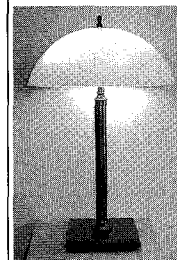
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LOST IN THE JIHAD

Why did the government's case against John Walker Lindh collapse?

BY JANE MAYER

Five weeks ago, John Walker Lindh, better known as the American Taliban, was quietly transferred to a medium-security prison northeast of Los Angeles, in the Mojave Desert. He was relieved by the move, which took place after federal officials in Alexandria, Virginia, had debriefed him for a year about his knowledge of Muslim extremists. His temporary cell in Virginia had reminded Lindh of a dog kennel; his meals were delivered through a metal slot in the door, and he had no interaction with other inmates. At the new prison, Lindh has a roommate and a window. On occasion, he can mingle with the general prison population, which includes about twenty other Muslims, most of them American-born converts like himself. His main diversions are translating ancient Arabic religious texts and reading. His lawyers recently bought him a subscription to the *New York Times*, and now that he's back in California, where he was raised, he has asked to receive the *Los Angeles Times*. Lindh has also met his goal of reading a hundred books during his first year in prison. His favorites have included Dostoyevsky's "The Brothers Karamazov," Viktor Frankl's "Man's Search for Meaning," and the Harry Potter novels, whose publication passed him by while he was cloistered in the Islamic madrasahs of Pakistan and camped alongside Taliban soldiers in Afghanistan.

Lindh, who is now twenty-two years old, pleaded guilty last summer to having aided the Taliban regime. He is due to spend the next twenty years in prison. Ordinarily, a first-time offender convicted of a single, nonviolent felony would be spared such a long sentence. Lindh, however, is the first American to have been successfully prosecuted as part of the Bush Administration's war on terrorism. Lindh was accused not only of embracing the beliefs of people who hated his own country but also of taking up arms with

them and being connected to the death of a young C.I.A. officer, Johnny Micheal Spann. From the moment Lindh was captured, in December of 2001, he was widely condemned as a murderous traitor.

The Justice Department, in particular, promoted this view. Before Lindh was indicted, Attorney General John Ashcroft held a press conference in which he revealed that the department planned to charge Lindh with "conspiracy to kill nationals of the United States" and with "providing material support" to Al Qaeda. Ashcroft declared that Lindh's "allegiance to those fanatics and terrorists never faltered, not even with the knowledge that they had murdered thousands of his countrymen." When Ashcroft announced the indictment, which included ten counts, he described Lindh as "an Al Qaeda-trained terrorist." Lindh faced the possibility of three life sentences plus an additional ninety years in prison.

This past summer, however, the government abruptly dropped nine of the original charges. The case was settled in a weekend-long flurry of negotiations that ended at 2 A.M. on the day that key evidence against Lindh was to be challenged in open court. As part of the plea agreement, Lindh accepted guilt on a charge that was not directly related to terrorism: violation of a 1999 executive order forbidding American citizens from contributing "services" to the Taliban. Ashcroft's high-profile prosecution effort mysteriously imploded. The Attorney General was not entirely convincing when he declared that Lindh's plea agreement was "an important victory in the war on terrorism."

Today, the government continues to regard Lindh as an enemy of the state who poses a serious danger to national security. Lindh is therefore covered by Special Administrative Measures, which prohibit him from speaking to the

media. Bryan Sierra, a Justice Department spokesman, declined "to discuss the legal basis" for this decision, but noted that "such measures are intended to monitor activity in the most dangerous cases, to prevent them from plotting violent acts."

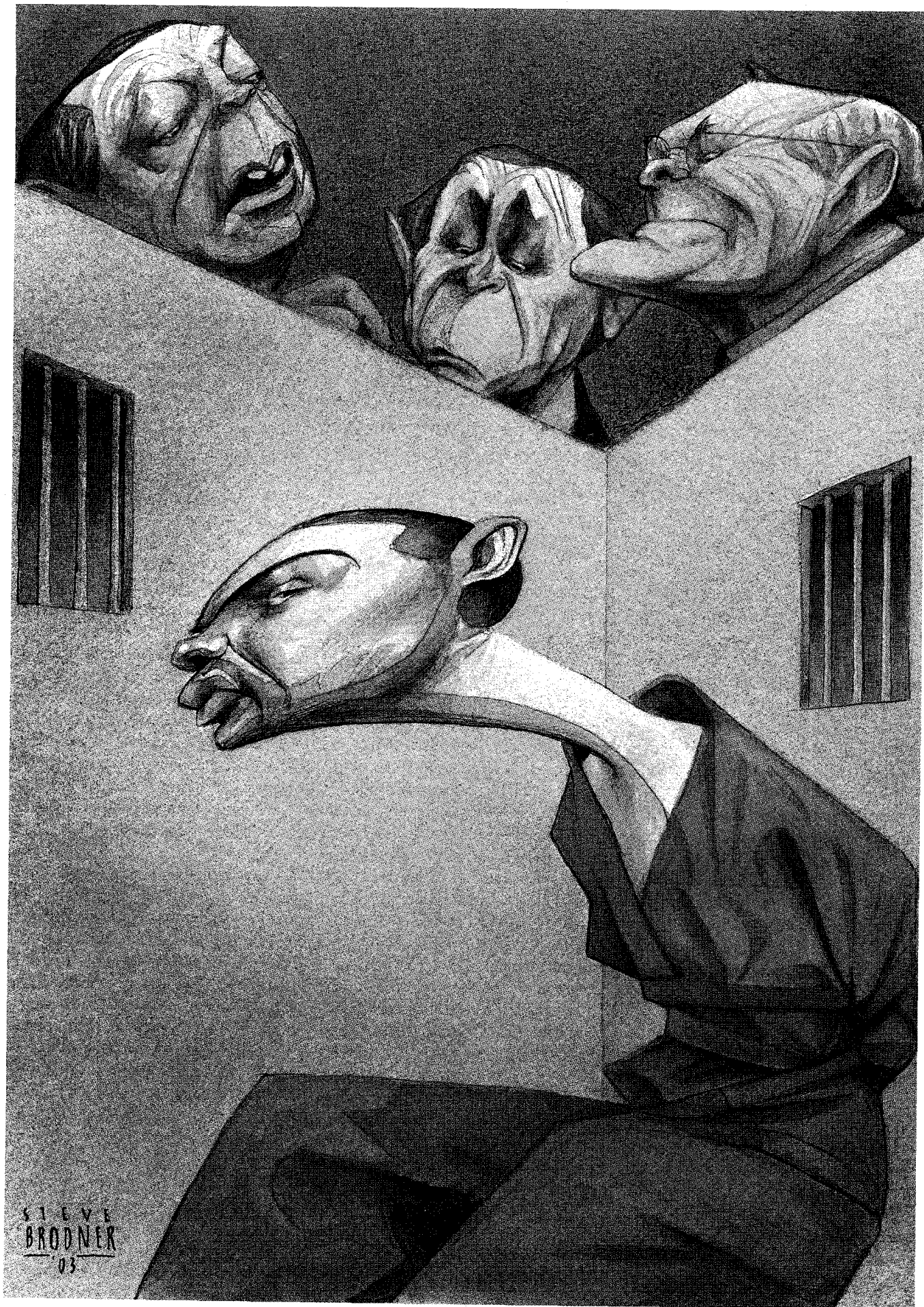
With this gag order in effect, and with many documents in the case still classified, much remains unknown about why the prosecution collapsed. Fragments of this story, however, have lately begun to emerge. Lindh's own words have surfaced in the form of notes taken during lengthy conversations with him by people involved in preparing his defense. In addition, a former Justice Department lawyer who is troubled by the government's handling of the case has decided to speak out.

Rohan Gunaratna, a respected terrorism scholar from Sri Lanka, interviewed Lindh for more than eight hours last summer in Alexandria. Gunaratna, who is affiliated with the University of St. Andrews, in Scotland, is the author of six books, including the recent "Inside Al Qaeda." A short, compactly built man with a friendly, wide face, Gunaratna met with me recently in Manhattan. He said that he had been wary when Lindh's defense lawyers first approached him about serving as an expert witness. He warned them that he believed that Lindh was almost certainly a member of Al Qaeda. The defense, undeterred, pressed him to meet the young suspect, and Gunaratna eventually agreed.

The encounter surprised him. "I have interviewed maybe two hundred terrorists over the past few years," he told me, "and I am certain that John Walker Lindh has never been a terrorist, and never intended to be one." Peering over his round spectacles for emphasis, he said, "A terrorist is a person who conducts attacks against civilian targets. John Walker Lindh never did that. He trained to fight in the Afghan Army, against other soldiers. He was not a member of

STEVE BRODNER

In the Lindh case, the prosecutorial zeal of the Ashcroft Doctrine appears to have weakened the government's position.





"I just have to create a few loose ends for other people to clear up, and then I can get out of here."

Al Qaeda. He didn't know much about Al Qaeda, and he was no exception. Dozens of others whom I've met who went to train and fight in Afghanistan also were not part of Al Qaeda." He laughed. "It's a *secret* organization." Gunaratna believes that Lindh "presents no national-security threat. He's been completely misrepresented to the American people."

Gunaratna's talks with Lindh started with standard gambits to create trust and rapport. They discussed Lindh's health and his treatment in prison. Soon, however, Gunaratna moved on to a close examination of what Lindh was thinking when his life first tilted toward radicalism, in the fall of 2000. Lindh, who converted to Islam during high school, skipped college in favor of studying Arabic in Yemen. With his parents' approval, he abandoned this instruction in favor of a fundamentalist education at a madrasah in Bannu, Pakistan. He spent his days memorizing the Koran.

By the spring of 2001, Lindh told Gunaratna, he had become convinced that a proper Muslim needed to do more than read and pray. "I believed it was the part of every good Muslim to train" for military jihad, he said. His hope, he said, was to help create a "pure Islamic state." Leaving his studies, he joined an Islamic paramilitary program run by Harakat-ul-Mujahideen (H.U.M.), a Pakistani

organization that trained Muslims to fight against Indian security forces in Kashmir. The group's guerrilla war against India enjoyed widespread popular support in Pakistan.

Some of its members, Gunaratna knew, had participated in kidnappings and suicide bombings. A schismatic offshoot of H.U.M. is thought to be responsible for the murder, last winter, of the *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl. The indictment states that Lindh "did knowingly conspire" with a "terrorist group dedicated to an extremist view of Islam." Lindh told Gunaratna, however, that he had been "unaware" that H.U.M. was a terrorist organization.

Tamara Sonn, an expert on Islam who teaches at the College of William and Mary, also examined Lindh for the defense. She heard a similar story from Lindh. He told Sonn that he had hoped to enlist in the Kashmir fight to help "poor Muslims being oppressed." His understanding of the complex conflict between Pakistan and India, Sonn said, was not sophisticated. "He's not someone who is politically aware," she told me. Although Sonn found Lindh to be "intelligent," he also seemed callow. His knowledge of Islam struck her as "idiosyncratic" and narrow. He had memorized the entire Koran, she noted, yet he was not worldly about

contemporary Islam. For example, Lindh expressed blank surprise when Sonn mentioned the Taliban's condemnation of Shiites and the regime's medieval constraints on women. "I'd have to study that," he told her, saying he didn't know much about it.

"I wondered, How could he *not* know?" Sonn said. "He was mystical, almost."

Lindh's romanticized vision of jihad was hardly matched by the reality of the H.U.M. camp. Perched in the foothills of the Himalayas, the camp was brimming with overweight teen-age Saudis who had come to get in shape at the Islamic equivalent of a fat farm. There was no live ammunition at the camp, and most of the three-week basic-training program consisted of calisthenics.

The camp was across the road from a Pakistani military base, and Pakistani intelligence officers regularly came to deliver instruction, Lindh told Gunaratna. His growing doubts about the purity of the cause were compounded when, during his basic training, he glimpsed a doctored map in the officers' quarters. Instead of showing Kashmir as an independent Islamic state, the map pictured Kashmir annexed to Pakistan. "It was not an Islamic struggle, it was a political struggle," Lindh told Gunaratna. "I became disillusioned by the training. H.U.M. had no clear goal, no clear answer about whether Kashmir was to become independent. My preoccupation was that Kashmir become independent. I didn't want it to join Pakistan, because Pakistan is a secular state." He dropped out.

Days after abandoning the Kashmiri cause, Lindh decided to join the jihad in Afghanistan. In the Pakistan madrasahs, he told Gunaratna, he had been steeped in stories about the mujahideen's glorious victories over the Soviets in the nineteen-eighties. Their brutal, puritanical successors, the Taliban, were venerated as upholders of Islam; their remaining foes, the Northern Alliance, were portrayed as cruel oppressors. "I had heard reports of massacres, child rape, torture," he later told the court. He was excited to learn that the Taliban had almost succeeded in defeating the Northern Alliance, and he was eager to help them turn all of Afghanistan into a theocracy.

In June, when Lindh crossed the Khyber Pass into Afghanistan, Pakistani border guards shot at him with machine

guns. He told Gunaratna that his original plan was to go directly to the Taliban's "front line." Had he succeeded, he might have sidestepped the offense that links him most closely to Al Qaeda. But, since he spoke no Urdu, Dari, or Pashto, the Taliban recruitment office he reported to in Kabul told him he would have to join a non-Afghan, Arabic-speaking unit. This group, Al Ansar, required that Lindh go through basic training again before joining the front. Al Ansar, which means "the supporters," was founded to help fight the Soviets; since those early days, it had been funded in part by Osama bin Laden's fortune. (Al Ansar is not affiliated with Ansar al-Islam, a militant group in Northern Iraq.)

That month, Lindh said, he checked into an Al Ansar training camp west of Kandahar, in southern Afghanistan. The camp's name was Al Farooq. Lindh has told government investigators that the days began at three-thirty in the morning, with a call to wash. At five-thirty, there was prayer and Koran reading until sunrise. At seven-thirty, there was morning exercise. Breakfast was at eight-thirty, followed by classes in warfare. Students learned how to handle various weapons, including rocket-propelled grenades; most of the focus, however, was on guns. ("It must have been boring," Sonn suggested to Lindh. "Not really," he replied. "I'd never seen guns before.") Then there was lunch, more classes, chores such as fetching water from a well, more classes, evening speeches, dinner, and more prayers. The bedtime roll call was at nine.

The government's indictment describes Al Farooq as an "Al Qaeda facility," and charges that Lindh went there "knowing that America and its citizens were the enemies of Bin Laden and Al Qaeda and that a principal purpose of Al Qaeda was to fight and kill Americans." Paul McNulty, the United States Attorney whose office prosecuted the case, contended in a recent interview that it would have been hard for Lindh not to know that "it was a place where Al Qaeda operatives trained."

Lindh admits that he knew that bin Laden gave money to Al Farooq. But he says he didn't know much about Al Qaeda, nor did he perceive that the boot camp had been infiltrated by bin Laden's organization. Lindh also claims that he never heard the words "Al Qaeda" at the camp. This sounds unlikely, but Gu-

naratna, who was familiar with the structure of the Al Farooq camp, found Lindh's claims plausible. "There were two kinds of courses at Al Farooq: Al Qaeda training, to fight civilians, and military training, to fight the Northern Alliance," he told me. "Lindh took only the military training." Bruce Hoffman, a terrorism expert at the Rand Corporation, in Washington, D.C., agreed with this analysis. "These camps were waging a traditional war against the Northern Alliance," he said. "Seventy thousand people were trained in general warfare at these camps, but perhaps only a tenth received advanced terrorist training." McNulty is more skeptical. "Sure, it's in the interests of the defense to suggest there was a distance between them, but the relationship between the Taliban and Al Qaeda is what it is," he said.

Perhaps the indictment's gravest charge was that Lindh had advance knowledge of murderous assaults like those on New York and Washington. At Al Farooq, the indictment states, Lindh learned that bin Laden "had sent forth" around fifty people to carry out twenty suicide terrorist operations against the United States and Israel. Lindh denies this, claiming that a government investigator garbled a story that he had told him. It was after September 11th that a Taliban supporter fighting alongside him against the Northern Alliance talked menacingly about future attacks. Lindh said he never heard any talk at Al Farooq about terrorists attacking America.

McNulty scoffed at this, noting that Osama bin Laden paid three visits to Al Farooq during the seven weeks Lindh was training there. "How could he *not* know that these people had a bone to pick with America?" he asked.

Regarding bin Laden's presence at Al Farooq, Lindh said that he was unsure what to make of him. He said that he had heard praise of bin Laden's role as a mujahideen warrior against the Soviets—but also rumors about his role as the terrorist behind the bombings of the U.S.S. Cole and America's embassies in East Africa. Lindh's classmates back in Yemen, however, had assured him that

these allegations weren't true. Lindh was prone to discount terrorism accusations against Muslims, even if it required accepting wild conspiracy theories. In a letter to his mother written after the 1998 embassy bombings, Lindh said that the attacks "seem far more likely to have been carried out by the American government than by any Muslims."

Considering Lindh's alleged role as an Al Qaeda recruit, one might expect his first encounter with its leader to have been momentous. Certainly, Tamara Sonn did when she quizzed him about it. "So you met bin Laden?" she asked.

"Sort of," Lindh replied, explaining that bin Laden gave an evening lecture. "What was he like?"

"To tell you the truth, he was really boring," Lindh replied. "I was so tired. The training was gruelling. I thought he seemed sick. Most of the speakers stood up when they spoke, but he sat down, and he talked in this really soft voice about the history of Afghanistan, and how everyone had invaded it starting with the Greeks. I listened to the beginning, but it wasn't very interesting. So I fell asleep."

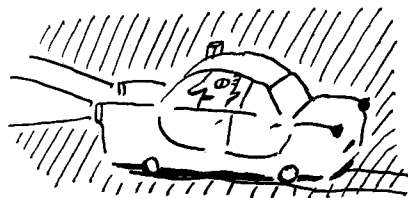
Sonn was shocked. The more she talked to Lindh about it, however, the more his story made sense. "He'd only vaguely heard of bin Laden," Sonn said. "If he'd known who he really was, he probably wouldn't have fallen asleep!"

Sonn, who said she doesn't like "anti-American people," pressed Lindh further. She asked what he'd thought of bin Laden's notorious fatwa calling on Muslims to kill Jews and Americans.

"Osama bin Laden can't issue a fatwa," Lindh responded testily, noting that only senior religious figures could deliver such edicts. Lindh, who thinks of himself as a devout person, was dismissive of bin Laden. "He is neither an intellectual nor a religious authority," he said.

McNulty was unimpressed by Lindh's protestations. "What matters is that he met with bin Laden," he said. "He provided services to a group that harbored Al Qaeda."

Lindh told Gunaratna as well about his disregard for bin Laden. After the evening lecture, he said, "All of the recruits went in line and either shook or kissed his hand. But I was offended by it. He was like a President, glorifying himself." Lindh said he was also put off by bin Laden's ever-present security detail, which con-



sisted of five aides. Bin Laden's entourage, Lindh noted, travelled in Toyota Land Cruisers. Toward the end of his training at Al Farooq, Lindh said, he swore allegiance to waging jihad—but not to serving bin Laden, as Al Qaeda members do.

Nonetheless, on his third visit to the camp, bin Laden personally thanked Lindh and a small group of fellow-graduates. Lindh and a few other soldiers were on cleaning duty one evening when bin Laden showed up; by agreeing to meet him, they were relieved of their menial tasks. When he was asked to reconstruct the meeting, Lindh remembered few details other than that bin Laden drank a lot of water. As Lindh told the story, the only thing bin Laden said to him was "I am glad you're here."

Although the government accused Lindh of having conspired to kill Americans for Al Qaeda, he said he explicitly turned down an offer to get involved in unspecified "martyrdom operations" in foreign countries, including the United States and Israel. This invitation, Lindh told Gunaratna, took place toward the end of his training at Al Farooq, in an encounter with Abu Mohammad al-Masri, an Egyptian official at the camp. Al-Masri, who has since been identified as an Al Qaeda member, called Lindh into a room and asked him to sit down on the floor beside him.

"He asked me whether I'd like to do a martyrdom operation," Lindh told Gunaratna. "I said, 'No, I'm not interested in that.' He said, 'Would you be interested in a U.S. or Israeli target?' I said, 'I came to Afghanistan to fight against the Northern Alliance. I am not interested in fighting against other countries.'" Then, Lindh recalled, "The Egyptian said, 'Whatever you do, do not tell other trainees about this private conversation.'"

Having discovered that anti-American operatives were being recruited in his midst, Lindh nonetheless remained with Al Ansar. Paul McNulty said that Lindh's exchange with al-Masri showed that he had "made a conscious decision to do things that were connected to terrorism."

Lindh claimed that al-Masri's invitation didn't particularly register with him, as he was focussed on fighting the Northern Alliance. He may not have directly participated in terrorism, but his passivity in the presence of figures like al-Masri is hard to fathom. The high-mindedness

that had inspired him to quit the Kashmir camp apparently did not resurface at Al Farooq. During his stay in the Alexandria prison, when Lindh was trying to convince the court of his innocence, he became more aggressive in his denunciation of terrorism. He wrote a short essay for the judge arguing that attacks on civilians were "expressly forbidden by the Koran and against Islam."

A week before September 11th, Lindh finally arrived at his post on the Taliban's front line, in the Northeast Takhar Province. He had been issued a rifle and two grenades. He said that he never once fired his gun in combat. Foreigners like Lindh were given only defensive duties; he served as a guard. Lindh spent most of his time reading the Koran, which he carried in a cloth sack, and sipping tea. His greatest claim to fame, Lindh said, was an expertise in cooking macaroni. A shipment had been included in the rations, but nobody else had prepared dried pasta before.

After arriving in prison, Lindh drew a detailed map for David Fechheimer, a private investigator hired by the defense. The map showed exactly where his foxhole had been on September 11th. Fechheimer later travelled to Afghanistan and located the spot with the help of the drawing. The foxhole was on a hill not far from the Tajikistan border. To the left was the Oxus River, which Alexander the Great crossed; to the right were the snow-capped peaks of the Hindu Kush. In the distance lurked the Northern Alliance, many of them sitting in Soviet-supplied tanks. It was so remote that there were no settlements, no electric lights, no roads.

News of the terrorist attacks on New York took some time to reach Lindh. Details were sketchy; it wasn't clear who had perpetrated the violence. Lindh did notice, however, that around September 11th a handful of Arab fighters close to bin Laden vanished from the front.

Ashcroft has excoriated Lindh for having no compunctions upon learning that his countrymen had been so horrifically attacked. In a widely discussed article that appeared in *Newsweek*, a reporter named Colin Soloway recounted an interview he had with Lindh that took place shortly after his capture. He asked Lindh if he supported bin Laden's fatwa against American citizens. Lindh said, "That requires a really long and

complicated explanation. I'm kind of out of it. I haven't eaten in two or three days." When Soloway pressed him, Lindh replied, "Yes, I supported it." During a recent interview, Soloway consulted his notes and acknowledged that Lindh had continued, "I don't know much about bin Laden. I know he's written a couple of books."

There are no reports of Lindh expressing support for the attacks in any of his other interviews or interrogations. Lindh maintains that he didn't fully understand Soloway's questioning and that he was consistently critical of what happened on 9/11. "He told me some people learned about the attacks on a radio and told him," Sonn said. Lindh recalled arguing with his fellow-soldiers that "if it was done by Muslims, then it was un-Islamic. You just can't kill women, children, and civilians, and you can't do surprise attacks."

Many of his fellow-soldiers, of course, celebrated the fall of the towers. Lindh told Gunaratna that 9/11 represented a "turning point" for him, and that he grew alienated from his peers. "I asked Lindh why he didn't desert," Gunaratna said. Lindh's answer was far from heroic. "He said he was scared for his life." Lindh was blunt about his self-interest. "There's a kind of paranoia in Afghanistan about spying," Lindh explained. "If I had spoken up for America, I would have stood out. Instead, I sat in the back and didn't comment."

The American bombing campaign against Afghan targets began in October, after the Taliban refused to turn over bin Laden. Bombs started falling on Lindh's outpost on November 5th. By November 10th, the Taliban's front line had broken and Lindh's unit was in retreat. Lindh told Sonn that the political situation was unclear to him on the ground. "He just didn't have a clue," Sonn recalled. "He said he saw American planes overhead. I asked, 'Didn't you know you were at war with America?' He said, 'No. I couldn't figure out why the Americans were helping the Northern Alliance against the Taliban.'" Lindh told Sonn that, at the time, he saw no connection between Afghanistan's civil war and terrorism. Caught up in his cause against the Northern Alliance, he claims, he was blinkered to the broader truth. In its court filings, the government described Lindh's

claim of ignorance as “simply not credible.”

Terrified of being captured by the Northern Alliance, Lindh's unit fled fifty miles on foot over two days. They lacked food and water. A third of his comrades died on the way. Lindh said he was unable to walk without assistance by the time he reached Kunduz, where he learned that a surrender had been negotiated for the unit. His Taliban commander, Mullah Faisal, had agreed to pay the warlord chief of the Northern Alliance, General Rashid Dostum, some five hundred thousand dollars in exchange for his unit's safe passage across Dostum's territory to the Taliban-controlled town of Herat. (Classified government cables confirm this cash transaction.) From there, Lindh told Gunaratna, he planned to escape to Pakistan and return to America.

Mullah Faisal, it turns out, was double-crossed. General Dostum collected the cash, but his men detained the prisoners, who had been disarmed, at a fortress that he commanded, called Qala-i-Jangi. Dostum was infamous for his savage treatment of enemies, and the prisoners panicked. A Taliban soldier exploded a hidden grenade.

In retaliation, Northern Alliance guards herded Lindh's unit into the basement of the fortress, then rolled a grenade down an airshaft. The next morning, Taliban soldiers were marched out and interrogated in the fort's courtyard by Dostum's men and two Americans—Johnny Micheal Spann and a second C.I.A. officer, Dave Tyson.

Videotape shot that day, November 25th, shows Lindh on his knees, with matted hair covering his face and his arms bound behind his back. He is kicked in the head by Dostum's troops as the two Americans move among them.

“I didn't know who the American guys were,” Lindh told Fechheimer, the private investigator. Neither Spann nor Tyson identified himself, and Lindh thought they were mercenaries working with Dostum. Spann wore bluejeans and a black sweatshirt. Tyson wore a shalwar kameez. Both carried Russian-made automatic rifles.

Lindh remained mute as the two American officers, cognizant of his Western appearance and evidently aiming to identify fleeing Al Qaeda members, tried to interrogate him. The videotape captures them saying, “He's going to fucking sit in prison the rest of his fucking short life. . . . We can only help the guys who want to talk to us” Soon afterward, in

a spontaneous uprising, several hundred Taliban prisoners overpowered Dostum's guards and killed Spann. Spann's father told me that he had since learned that his son “fired his AK-47 until its ammo ran out, then fired his Glock pistol until its ammo ran out, and then continued to fight them hand-to-hand until they overtook him.” He went on, “We could never prove that John Walker Lindh touched Mike or pulled the trigger.” He added, “But, as far as I'm concerned, everyone who was part of Al Qaeda is guilty.”

In the mayhem, Tyson managed to escape. He borrowed a German journalist's satellite phone to call for military help, but American bombs went astray and destroyed a Northern Alliance post. “These are the sort of details that they really didn't want coming to light in a trial,” Fechheimer, who has copies of the phone bills, said.

Lindh, who had been bound and unarmed when the melee broke out, was shot in the leg. He played dead for twelve hours in the yard before crawling at night into the fortress's basement. He and three hundred other Taliban remained there for the next week as Northern Alliance soldiers tried to expel them with gunfire, grenades, ignited diesel fuel, and then freezing water, which flooded the basement by several feet. Many drowned. Lindh leaned on a stick to stay upright, but slipped on a body at one point, falling and

swallowing some water, which was contaminated with human remains and waste.

On December 1st, Lindh and eighty-five other survivors crawled out to surrender. This time, when he saw American journalists and Red Cross workers, Lindh begged for their help. Speaking in Arabic-accented English, he identified himself as a fellow American citizen.

One of the oddities of the Lindh case is that interviews he gave to reporters and government interrogators in the first several days after his capture supplied virtually all of the incriminating evidence against him. Lindh evidently didn't comprehend the legal peril he was in—or, if he did, he felt coerced into talking. CNN was the first television news organization to interview him; the full transcript of that interview was obtained by Lindh's lawyers.

Robert Pelton, a freelance contributor to CNN, is the author of a book entitled “The World's Most Dangerous Places.” Pelton was staying at General Dostum's home—an unorthodox arrangement—and was told by Dostum about the existence of the “American Taliban.” Lindh had been taken to a hospital some three hours away. He had a bullet in his thigh, various shrapnel wounds, and intestinal problems from the contaminated water. Pelton rushed to the hospital.

An American Special Forces officer at the hospital later described Lindh,



“Loved the movie. Hated the audience.”



RUMOR OF THE WEEK *Jesse Jackson is said to be in Tampa, Florida, attempting to negotiate a truce between George Steinbrenner and Derek Jeter.*

who was lying on the floor to recover from his wounds, as "delirious." Another American officer jokingly offered to shoot Lindh on the spot. But Pelton told them not to kill Lindh "yet." He wanted to interview him first.

Pelton approached Lindh, who asked him, "Who are you?"

"CNN," Pelton answered.

"Look, you don't have my permission to film me," Lindh replied.

"O.K.," said Pelton, still filming. "Well, that's not our concern right now. Our concern is, uh, your welfare."

"All right," Lindh said. "If you're concerned about my welfare, don't film me."

"Would you like some food, Johnny?" Pelton then asked. "I brought some cookies."

"Yes, please," Lindh said. "I haven't eaten in about more than a week." He went on, "I haven't eaten or slept in a long time. I can't think very clearly right now."

With Pelton still filming, Lindh identified himself by his Muslim name: Abdul Hamid. The doctors discussed giving him a blood transfusion. "Abdul, can I ask how you ended up here?" Pelton asked.

"It's, uh, a long story," Lindh said.

"I'd love to hear it," Pelton said.

"If you asked at a different time, I could give you a better answer," Lindh said.

After some discussion, the doctors decided to inject Lindh with a sedative painkiller. Pelton told Lindh that it was "happy juice." His questions grew more pointed. "Were you with the Taliban the whole time, or were you doing something else?" he asked.

While under sedation, Lindh told Pelton that he was with Al Ansar. Pelton asked if that was the same as the 055 brigade, an Al Qaeda guerrilla force.

"I'm not familiar with that," Lindh said.

"That's the term," Pelton said. "How did you get to Afghanistan?" he asked, adding that "some friends of mine fought in Chechnya." This comment, implying camaraderie, inspired Lindh to ask Pelton if he was a Muslim. "Unfortunately, I'm not," he said. "But I respect the cause and I respect the call."

By the time Pelton left, he had a tape of Lindh saying that his "heart became attached" to the Taliban, and that "the goal of every Muslim" was to be a "*shahid*," or martyr. At the time, so soon after September 11th, most people understood Muslim martyrdom to mean suicide ter-

EDWARD SOREL

rorism—not, say, dying in battle against the Northern Alliance. Lindh also said that he disapproved of the uprising that had led to Spann's death, because it was un-Islamic to break an agreement to surrender. That part wasn't news, however. What was news was an American saying that he knew that "the training camps that the Arabs train in before they come to the front line are funded by Osama bin Laden"—and that he had attended one.

Pelton's interview, which portrayed Lindh as a committed traitor, was televised around the world. Within days, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld declared that Lindh "was fighting on the Al Qaeda side." Senator Hillary Clinton said she considered him a traitor. A *Newsweek* poll taken not long afterward reflected that more than forty per cent of Americans felt that Lindh should be tried for treason, a charge punishable by death. One of the few voices of compassion was President Bush, who called him a "poor fellow."

For the next fifty-four days, Lindh was held incommunicado and interrogated by the United States government. After being detained for two weeks in Afghanistan, Lindh was confined aboard Navy ships. Attorney General Ashcroft dismissed complaints from Lindh's lawyers and family about his treatment. When announcing the indictment, on February 5th, Ashcroft said that Lindh's rights had been "scrupulously honored." Lindh had been read the Miranda warning, Ashcroft noted, and had waived his right to a lawyer before being interviewed by the F.B.I.

The defense claims that court records suggest a different story. After Lindh's parents, Frank Lindh and Marilyn Walker, heard media reports about their son's capture, they hired James Brosnahan, a prominent San Francisco trial lawyer. On December 3rd, two days after Lindh was taken into custody, Brosnahan sent letters to Ashcroft, Rumsfeld, George Tenet, the director of the C.I.A., and Secretary of State Colin Powell, informing them that he represented Lindh and wanted to meet with him.

In Afghanistan, Lindh asked for counsel almost immediately. According to recently declassified government documents, a Navy medic who was present when Lindh arrived at the hospital on December 1st sent a cable to the United

States saying that Lindh had asked, "When will I be able to speak to a lawyer?" Yet Lindh wasn't told that his parents had hired a lawyer for him until January. Frank Lindh, who is himself an attorney, tried to send word about Brosnahan to his son in a letter he entrusted to the Red Cross, whose mandate is to communicate with soldiers across battle lines. American officials blocked the delivery of the letter. His parents also tried to get word to him through the State Department, the Defense Department, and their representatives in Congress. "He was behind a wall of silence," his father said. Bryan Sierra, the Justice Department spokesman, declined to comment.

During this time, Lindh was sometimes kept blindfolded, naked, and bound to a stretcher with duct tape, according to a declassified account from a Navy physician. He was fed only a thousand calories a day, and was left cold and sleep-deprived in a pitch-dark steel shipping container. The physician described Lindh as "disoriented" and "suffering lack of nourishment," adding that "suicide is a concern."

The prosecution attorneys have argued that, as an "illegal enemy combatant" captured on the battlefield, Lindh, like other recent accused terrorists, was not entitled to the ordinary protections of American civil jurisprudence. Attorneys also argued that Lindh wasn't covered by the Geneva convention, because, unlike legitimate prisoners of war, he had fought for an illegal army. The Ashcroft Doctrine, as it has come to be known, holds that the threat posed by accused terrorists is so grave that it's in the national interest to value the prevention of additional harm over the rights of the accused. But in the Lindh case prosecutorial zeal appears to have weakened, rather than strengthened, the government's hand, contributing to a record of error that hastened the eventual settlement of the case on diminished charges.

In the first days of December, for instance, an unnamed defense intelligence officer who had interrogated Lindh sent a classified cable to Washington filled with faulty assumptions. A copy of the document shows that the interrogator identifies Lindh fifteen times as an "al Qaeda member." Months later, two members of Lindh's legal team, Brosnahan and George Harris, interviewed the officer. They say he acknowledged that Lindh had never

actually used the words "Al Qaeda." The interrogator, who was new to the job, admitted that he had consistently replaced the words "Al Ansar" with "Al Qaeda."

On December 9th, an F.B.I. agent assigned to Pakistan, Christopher Reimann, began extracting the confession from Lindh that became the basis for the criminal case. The encounter took place at Camp Rhino, a Marine base near Kandahar. Lindh, still blindfolded and handcuffed, was taken from his steel container to a nearby tent. Lindh's blindfold was removed. Reimann flashed his F.B.I. badge, and began to question Lindh. Reimann read Lindh the Miranda warning. But, when noting the right to counsel, the agent now acknowledges, he ad-libbed, "Of course, there are no lawyers here."

"I told him that if he wanted a lawyer the interview would end right there," Reimann said in a phone conversation. "He's an adult, he had the opportunity to make that decision." At no point did Reimann mention that Lindh's family had hired counsel for him. Under these circumstances, Lindh, still in handcuffs, signed a waiver of his right to counsel. "He thought it was the only way he was ever going to get out of that metal box," George Harris said. According to Lindh, he was not allowed to read the interview summary or sign it—a violation of F.B.I. protocols. (Reimann denied this.) There was no second agent present during the interview, and no tape was made of the confession.

According to Gunaratna and others who talked with Lindh, Reimann's classified cable summarizing the interrogation, which runs to nine pages, is misleading. When Reimann mentioned bin Laden for the first time in his cable, he added "Al Qaeda" to the text, making it appear that Lindh was a member. ("He was told that the Arab group is Usama Bin Laden's/Al Qaeda's group.") He correctly noted that Lindh had heard of plans for twenty more suicide attacks on America from an Al Farooq instructor. However, Reimann wrote that this conversation took place in "early June 2001"—not, as Lindh contends, during a conversation with the instructor which took place on the front lines after September 11th. Lindh claims that he told Reimann that he condemned the attacks on America, arguing that they violated the word of the Koran. Reimann's cable says that Lindh "did not

express his opinion about the attacks.”

Reimann, who has since been transferred from Pakistan to another country, defended his report to me, and insisted that Lindh “said he was” a member of Al Qaeda. Reimann also said he was “one hundred per cent sure” that Lindh told him he had prior knowledge of future terrorist attacks, and added, “I don’t think he changed his tune until after he got a lawyer.”

Two days before Reimann began his interrogation, the Justice Department was notified by the F.B.I. that an agent planned to question Lindh without the presence of counsel. John De Pue, a trial attorney in the Terrorism and Violent Crime section of the Justice Department, was not sure if this was proper, and consulted with the Professional Responsibility Advisory Office, an internal-ethics unit. The legal adviser on duty that Friday to handle such questions was Jesselyn Radack. A thirty-year-old graduate of Brown University and Yale Law School, Radack had recently joined the internal-ethics unit after being selected for the Attorney General’s prestigious Honors Program. Ambitious, idealistic, and proud to have graduated from Brown with honors in three majors, she had dreamed about this sort of high-profile case. After researching the matter and discussing it with a superior, she sent an e-mail to De Pue offering advice. “I consulted with a Senior Legal Advisor here,” she wrote, “and we don’t think you can have the F.B.I. agent question Walker. It would be a pre-indictment, custodial overt interview, which is not authorized by law.” Radack pointed out that Lindh’s father had already retained a lawyer for him, which made it improper to approach Lindh without approaching his counsel, too.

“Thanks much,” De Pue wrote back, according to copies of the e-mails, which were first published in *Newsweek*. “I have passed assessment along and will keep you posted.”

On December 10th, Radack was surprised to learn that Reimann had questioned Lindh anyway. Alarmed, she advised De Pue that Lindh’s confession might “have to be sealed” and “only used for national security purposes,” not in a criminal case against him. She pressed for more information.

“Ugh,” De Pue e-mailed back. “We are

trying to figure out what actually transpired and what, if anything, Walker said.”

Ten days later, Radack learned that the prosecution was ignoring her unit’s advice and intended to use Walker’s confession. It argued that, because Lindh had been read his Miranda rights, the confession had been properly obtained. Radack was still troubled. “It was like ethics were out the window,” she said during a recent interview at her home, in Washington, D.C. “After 9/11, it was, like, ‘anything goes’ in the name of terrorism. It felt like they’d made up their minds to get him, regardless of the process.” Radack believed that the role of the ethics office was to “rein in the cowboys” whose zeal to stop criminals sometimes led them to overstep legal boundaries. “But after 9/11 we were bending ethics to fit our needs,” she said. “Something wrong was going on. It wasn’t just fishy—it stank.”

Radack recalled that at her office “I was getting the vibes: Don’t take this further. Drop it.” On January 15th, when Ashcroft announced the government’s complaint against Lindh, it became clear why. Ashcroft stated that the Justice Department had concluded that the F.B.I.’s interrogation of Lindh was legal because “the subject here is entitled to choose his own lawyer, and to our knowledge, has not chosen a lawyer at this time.” The lawyer whom Lindh’s father had hired to represent him, Ashcroft reasoned, wasn’t legitimate, because Lindh hadn’t personally retained him. Ashcroft did not mention that Brosnahan’s efforts to communicate with Lindh had been blocked.

Ashcroft’s statement was an unequivocal contradiction of the Professional Responsibility Advisory Office’s advice. Radack, who was appalled by Ashcroft’s statement, said that she soon learned how costly it was to buck “the party line.” Two weeks after the government’s complaint was filed, she received a “blistering” performance review. It never mentioned her advice in the Lindh matter, but it severely questioned her legal judgment. She was advised to get a new job; otherwise, the performance review would be placed in

her permanent file. Radack, who had received a merit bonus the year before, quickly found a job with a private law firm.

Last March, just before her departure, Radack learned that U.S. District Court Judge T. S. Ellis III, who was presiding over the Lindh case, had requested that all copies of the Justice Department’s internal correspondence about the conditions of Lindh’s interrogation be sent to him. Ellis wanted to determine if the documents should be passed on to the defense team, who had filed a discovery motion requesting various Justice Department files related to the case. Although Radack had written more than a dozen e-mails on the subject, she learned from a prosecutor named Randy Bellows that the Justice Department had turned over only two of them, neither of which reflected her fear that the F.B.I.’s actions had been unethical and that Lindh’s confession might have to be sealed. Radack told her supervisor, Claudia Flynn, that there were many more e-mails than had been sent to the court. According to Radack, Flynn retorted that she had sent everything that had been in the official Lindh file. Radack rushed to the archives to check the case’s paper file. “I felt instantly sick,” she said. The file, which had been a thick, staple-bound stack of paper, had been reduced to several sheets. All the staples had been removed. The remaining papers included fax cover sheets, which she’d never seen before, from Flynn, addressed to several top officials at the Justice Department, including Alice Fisher, the Deputy Assistant Attorney General in charge of the Criminal Division. Only three of the dozen or more e-mails that Radack had written were left in the file.

Radack called the Justice Department’s computer help line, and she managed to recover most of the missing e-mails, which she delivered, with a memo, to Flynn. She offered to send them on to Bellows. Radack said that Flynn told her not to do so; she reluctantly complied.

“The e-mails were definitely relevant,” Radack said. “They undermined the public statements the Justice Department was making about how they didn’t think Lindh’s rights were violated.” She paused. “Someone deliberately purged the e-mails from the file. In violation of the rules of federal procedure, they were going to withhold these documents from the court.”

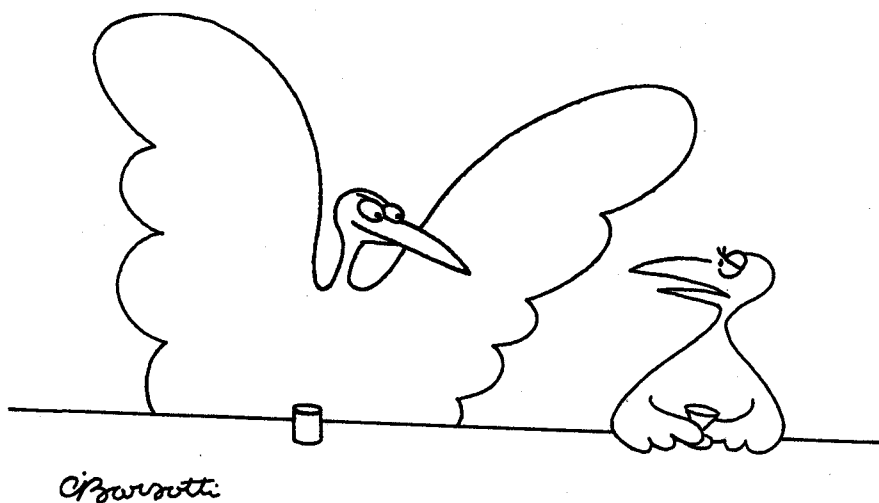


An official list compiled by the prosecution confirms that the Justice Department did not hand over Radack's most critical e-mail, in which she questioned the viability of Lindh's confession, until after her confrontation with Flynn. Bryan Sierra, the Justice Department spokesman, declined to comment on Radack's charges, and Flynn did not return calls seeking comment on the file.

In June, several of Radack's e-mails were anonymously leaked to *Newsweek*. Judge Ellis ordered the Justice Department to investigate their origins, and ruled the e-mails privileged. Radack received a call from the Inspector General's office at Justice, asking her about any involvement. When she declined to speak at length, Justice Department officials informed managing partners at her new law firm that she was the target of a "criminal investigation." Her firm placed her on administrative leave. Radack hired a lawyer, Frederick Robinson, who sought protection for her as a whistle-blower. According to Robinson, the Justice Department recently sent her file to the U.S. Attorney's office in Washington. Robinson said that an assistant U.S. Attorney told him that Radack's criminal case was "neither on the front burner nor the back burner."

Last July, two days before Lindh's lawyers planned to challenge the legitimacy of his F.B.I. confession in court, claiming that it had been coerced under shocking conditions, the prosecutors offered them a surprise deal. "The Defense Department was really worried about the claims of mistreatment," George Harris said. "They said the deal had to be struck before the suppression hearing, so the details wouldn't get out. They really wanted us to agree to drop any claims of intentional mistreatment. That was key to Rumsfeld."

The F.B.I. also faced difficulties in taking the case to court. The defense had subpoenaed a witness against Reimann from his past. Lindh's lawyers had interviewed a Cuban-American, Rene Cruz, Jr., whom Reimann had arrested on terrorist charges in California six years before. The case had been dropped without an indictment. Cruz claimed that Reimann had failed to respect due process, distorted facts, and generally "treated me like an animal." Cruz's lawyer, Ralph Fer-



"Stupid—yet irresistible."

andez, said that he had warned the government about the situation. "The defense was in a frenzy the whole weekend," Fernandez said. "I can't tell you how big a liability Reimann was."

In an interview, Paul McNulty, the U.S. Attorney, denied the importance of the Cruz matter but acknowledged that "there were risks to going forward" to trial, "particularly the conspiracy-to-murder charge." Yet, even though his office dropped nine of the ten original charges, McNulty said he was "satisfied with the outcome."

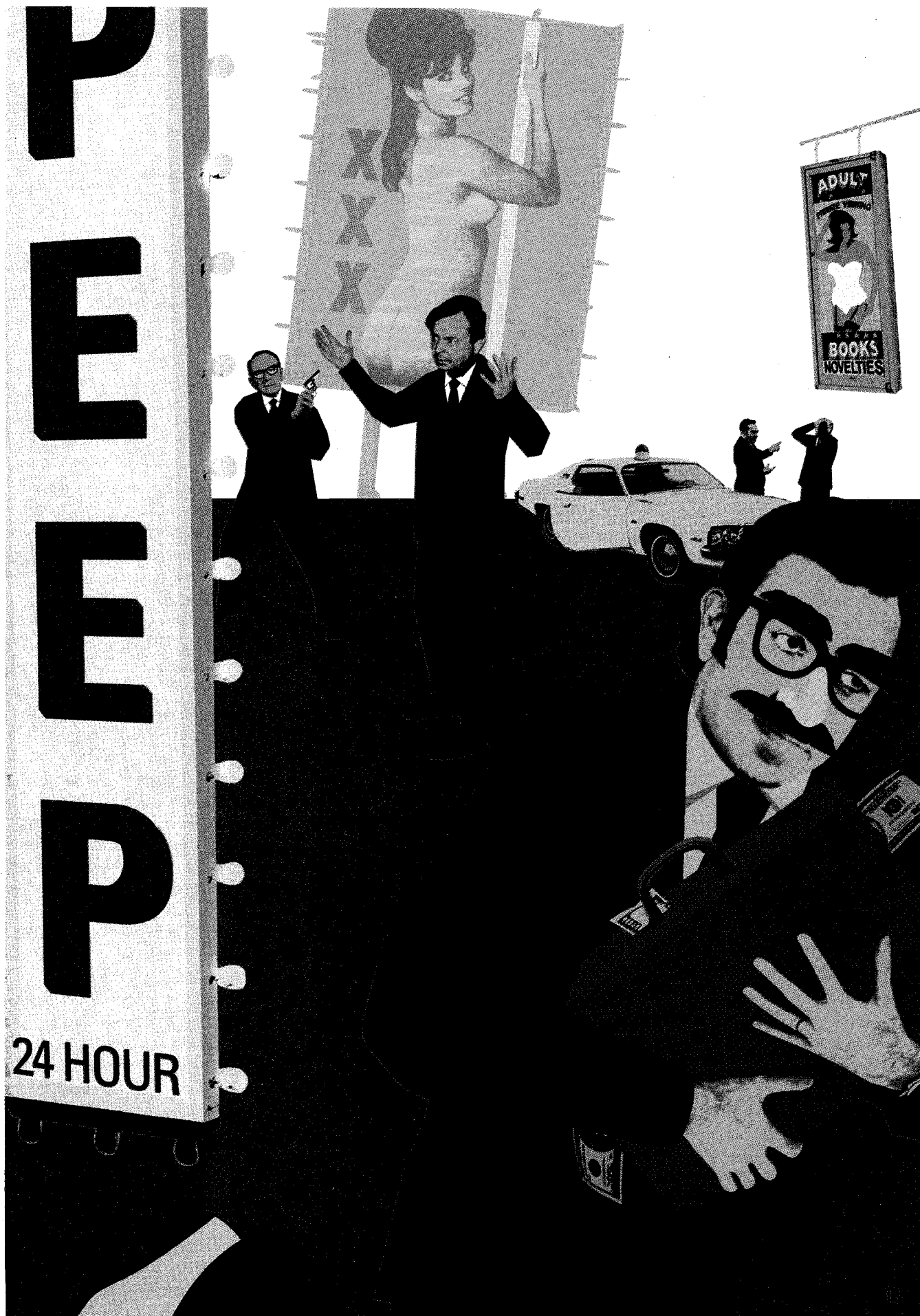
Clearly, Lindh's attorneys also thought there were risks, since they accepted a guilty plea and a twenty-year sentence. One major factor was that, after the indictment, prosecutors added a subsequent count, charging Lindh with committing a felony while carrying grenades. This charge alone carried a thirty-year minimum sentence. His lawyers thought the twenty-year plea was the best they could do. Another Lindh attorney, Tony West, now criticizes the deal as unjust. "It's part of the change in approach to law in this country, to prevention," he said. "You can detain people without evidence, make allegations, then develop the evidence later. If you have no evidence, you drop the charges. The only problem is, you've destroyed someone's life in the process."

Rohan Gunaratna thinks that Lindh's prosecution was warped in part by American officials' poor understanding of the difference between fervent Muslims and Al Qaeda terrorists. Government offi-

cials, he said, have since grown more sophisticated about Islam, but, at the time that Lindh was captured, "They were like babies. They didn't know enough about Islam or Afghanistan. It was totally alien to them."

Gunaratna now hopes to supervise Lindh's education while he's in prison. "I want him to be my student," he said. "His knowledge of Arabic and the Koran is comparable to that of a Ph.D. candidate." Gunaratna told me that since pleading guilty Lindh has spent untold hours with government investigators and analysts. United States authorities won't discuss what Lindh has told them, but Gunaratna said that although Lindh was just a foot soldier, "he's provided significant information—names, sources, methods." Over the long term, Gunaratna said, Lindh can "provide enormous insight into how young Muslim converts get sucked in."

It's not just Lindh's defense team who considered the prosecution flawed. The weakness of the case was signalled by Judge Ellis, who, in a sentencing hearing after the settlement, noted that the case linking Lindh to Al Qaeda "was not strong" and that there was "no evidence" tying him to Spann's death. When Spann's heartbroken father objected to this statement, Judge Ellis responded gently. "He clearly is a hero," he said, speaking of Spann. "Of all the things he fought for, one of them is that we don't convict people in the absence of proof beyond a reasonable doubt." ♦



EMPIRE OF THE OBSCENE

Reuben Sturman, the creator of the modern adult-entertainment industry, loved to flout the law. Then he went too far.

BY ERIC SCHLOSSER

On a gray, snowy day in the fall of 1977, a young I.R.S. special agent named Richard N. Rosfelder, Jr., drove to the Sovereign News headquarters, a heavily fortified two-story brick warehouse in the heart of a Cleveland ghetto. Rosfelder planned to inform its owner, Reuben Sturman, that he was being investigated for tax evasion. A certified letter would have done the job, but Rosfelder wanted to meet Sturman, who, at the time, was the world's biggest producer and distributor of hard-core pornography. Sturman, whose holdings were larger than those of the more flamboyant Hugh Hefner and Larry Flynt, was highly secretive about his business operations. The Cleveland *Plain Dealer* once speculated that he might be the wealthiest man in the state of Ohio, though for more than a decade the only photograph of him the newspaper possessed was a mug shot taken in 1964.

In front of the Sovereign News building, Rosfelder and his partner, Thomas N. Ciechanski, noticed a man clearing snow from the windshield of a Cadillac. It looked like Sturman, but they weren't sure. A tall, slender man in his early fifties, Sturman constantly changed his appearance, growing a beard or a mustache and then shaving it, wearing eyeglasses on some days and not on others. Rosfelder approached the man and asked where he could find Reuben Sturman. The man told him to ring the buzzer at the warehouse door, and then drove off in the Cadillac, with a big wave and a smile, as a voice on the intercom informed Rosfelder that there was nobody by that name at this address.

Rosfelder's brief encounter with Sturman was the first round of a legal pursuit that would unfold over the next fifteen years, as the I.R.S. investigation expanded from Cleveland to Los Ange-

les, New York, Chicago, Toronto, London, Zurich, Hong Kong, Panama, and western Africa. Sturman liked to flout authority, and soon became the target of law-enforcement agencies worldwide. Sturman's supporters argued that he was a hardworking businessman and a brave defender of the First Amendment. His opponents said that he was an organized-crime figure, whose success stemmed in large part from a close working relationship with the Cosa Nostra. Rosfelder's view was straightforward: he thought Sturman was an arrogant, multimillion-dollar tax cheat.

The story of Reuben Sturman spans the history of the modern American sex industry, from the underground distribution of girlie magazines to the sale of adult videos at urban newsstands and suburban malls. In 1986, Attorney General Edwin Meese III's Commission on Pornography identified Sturman as the most prominent figure in the business. Though his name remains largely unknown, his influence is inescapable.

The revenues from today's sex industry are difficult to estimate, but it is believed that Americans now spend between eight and ten billion dollars a year on "adult entertainment"—hard-core videos and DVDs, Internet porn, cable and satellite porn, peep shows, phone sex, live sex acts, sexual toys, and sex magazines. That's an amount roughly equivalent to Hollywood's domestic box-office receipts. Like Walt Disney, Sturman played a central role in the creation of an entirely new industry—one that manufactured profitable fantasies for adults rather than children.

Reuben Sturman's parents were Russian immigrants who ran a small neighborhood grocery shop on Cleveland's East Side. He aimed to do better. After three years in the Army Air Force,

he attended Western Reserve University, briefly worked as a candy and tobacco wholesaler, got married, and then decided to start a business of his own. He'd met a man from Owensboro, Kentucky, who had access to remaindered comic books. Sturman obtained them at a low cost, two dozen to a package, and began offering them to local candy stores for a nickel each, half the usual price. He was a good salesman, funny and full of charm. The garage at Sturman's house served as his first warehouse. He sold comics from the trunk of his car, making deliveries at mom-and-pop stores throughout Cleveland.

The business soon had a name, the Premium Sales Company, and a narrow storefront warehouse. Sturman worked long hours, putting all his earnings back into the business, extending his sales route first to Buffalo, then to Pittsburgh, Detroit, Chicago, and Cincinnati. He eventually opened a wholesale warehouse in each city, supplying them not only with comic books but also with car magazines, movie magazines, and crossword-puzzle magazines. His wife, Esther, joined the company, as did his younger brother, Joseph.

When an employee at Premium Sales suggested that the company carry a few sex titles, Sturman gave his approval without much thought. The recent success of *Playboy* had inspired many imitations, cheaply published magazines featuring black-and-white photographs of topless women. Sturman learned that sex titles not only sold well but had much higher profit margins than remaindered comic books. While other wholesale distributors shunned lurid magazines and paperbacks, he tried to obtain as many as possible.

In 1964, F.B.I. agents raided Sturman's Cleveland warehouse, seizing five hundred and ninety copies of a paper-

No one in the industry could compete with Sturman. No jury would convict him, and demand for his products increased every year.

back called "Sex Life of a Cop," a book that doesn't contain a single dirty word. The F.B.I. also confiscated copies of Jack Kerouac's "The Subterraneans."

Sturman was indicted for distributing obscene materials, and the charges forced him to consider the larger issues surrounding pornography. Under a federal law dating to 1873, an obscenity offense was a felony and could result in a long prison sentence and large fines. The political climate was changing, but there were still strong limits on sexual expression. Hollywood films couldn't show any nudity, and married couples on television slept in separate beds. Lenny Bruce had just been convicted and given a four-month sentence for saying words like "ass," "balls," and "tits" during his New York City night-club act.

Sturman pleaded not guilty to the federal obscenity charge. Then he sued J. Edgar Hoover and the F.B.I. for violating his constitutional rights. Sturman argued that the First Amendment guaranteed Americans the right to buy sexually explicit material—and gave him the right to produce, distribute, and sell it. In 1967, the Supreme Court ruled that "Sex Life of a Cop" was not obscene. The suit against J. Edgar Hoover was dismissed by an appeals court, but Reuben Sturman had made his point: he was not afraid of the F.B.I. or of the federal government.

Under state laws, Sturman eventually faced obscenity indictments in California, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, and Ohio. He hired good First Amendment attorneys, and won every case. He opened retail stores, first in Cleveland, then in other Midwestern cities and Canada, that offered a wide assortment of sex books and magazines, most of which were now published by his companies. The content grew more explicit with each victory in court. The magazines contained photographs of simulated intercourse. The paperbacks described orgies, bondage, homosexuality, and incest in graphic detail. The sex industry was booming.

On September 6, 1968, federal agents arrested Sturman's wife at their home, handcuffing her in front of their children. She was arraigned on eighteen counts of distrib-

uting obscenity through the mail. Sturman's brother was also arrested that day, and arraigned on the same charges. Sturman was out of town when the charges were filed. The three each faced a possible sentence of ninety years in prison and a ninety-thousand-dollar fine. The arrests were front-page news in Cleveland. "I'm tired of pussyfooting around with smut," U.S. attorney Bernard J. Stuplinski said.

While the case dragged through the courts, Reuben Sturman's brother quit the business, and Sturman and his wife were divorced. As part of the settlement, she relinquished her stake in the company, which was now called Sovereign News.

But Sturman had no intention of quitting. Now that he was the sole owner, he sought to disguise that fact. If the authorities couldn't prove that he owned the business, they couldn't arrest him or indict him for anything it sold. Sovereign News was split into hundreds of companies, incorporated in Delaware or Nevada. The shares, officers, and board members of these new entities were listed in public documents—and Reuben Sturman's name didn't appear anywhere.

Sturman pioneered new techniques of concealment, recruiting people in Canada who had no knowledge of the sex industry, many of them young Americans avoiding the draft, to serve as "nominees"—straw men listed on corporate records as a legal cover for the people who actually ran the companies. The names of these nominees appeared on public documents, on income-tax filings, on the rubber stamps used to sign company checks. The nominees in Canada were hard to find, and their financial stake in various companies was hard to measure, since the I.R.S. didn't have access to their tax returns. For example, an investigator trying to learn who ran Sovereign News would find that it was now an asset of the "Bahamian Company," whose shares were controlled by "Wilson and Company," based in Nevada. The president of the Bahamian Company, according to the records, was Morton Goss, the owner of a carpet store in Ontario.

Security cameras and heavy steel doors were added to the Sovereign News warehouse, where Sturman kept his of-

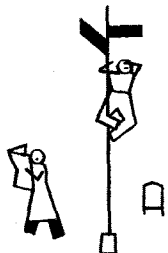
fice. Memos to Sturman were addressed to "R and D" or "To whom it may concern." His business letters often ended with "Best regards," and no signature. Sturman offered to pay the legal fees of employees who refused to cooperate with government investigations. He also formed his own company, National Polygraph, to give lie-detector tests and root out informers.

The obscenity charges stemming from Sturman's 1968 indictment were dismissed. Meanwhile, after seeing an old standup machine that showed film of a naked woman on a small screen, Sturman came up with the idea of putting 8-mm. projectors in a private booth with a lock on the door. Customers paid a quarter to see one or two minutes of a twelve-minute continuous film loop. Sturman's dark, cramped booths soon became the most lucrative sector of the porn industry.

An average-sized store earned at least two thousand dollars a week from its peep booths, and a large store could easily collect five times that amount. Sturman not only earned money from peeps in his own stores but also gave the machines to competitors, who paid him half of their receipts. The employees of Sturman's service companies fanned out across the United States on their daily or weekly rounds, visiting hundreds of adult bookstores, checking the coin meters on peep booths, collecting the money, handing store owners or managers their cut, and then heading out to the next stop.

Sturman used the profits from his peep booths to open more stores and warehouses in the United States, as well as to enter overseas markets. He backed partners in Germany, France, Switzerland, England, and the Netherlands, and began to finance hard-core film production in this country and abroad. By his own count, his companies released more than seven thousand sex films, an average of around one a day for twenty years.

Federal agents rang the buzzer at Sturman's Cleveland warehouse on March 19, 1975. They were denied entry, even after holding a search warrant up to the security camera, so they battered the steel door open with sledgehammers. As nearly two dozen agents searched the warehouse, photographing evidence and confiscating binders full of



detailed company accounts, they were followed by Sturman's lawyers, who were busy photographing them.

Within days of the raid, Sturman changed the structure of his corporate holdings again. The information in the binders left the government with a comprehensive picture of a group of companies that no longer existed. Sturman transferred his holdings to countries with airtight corporate-secrecy laws—Liechtenstein, Panama, and Liberia. Monrovia eventually became the official headquarters of Reuben Sturman's worldwide pornography empire.

New obscenity indictments now seemed more like a nuisance than a real threat. Sturman had gained considerable control over the market. In addition to manufacturing and selling his own products, he was the largest distributor of independently made pornography. The names of his companies befitted a porn king: Sovereign News, Noble News, Majestic News.

Sturman bought a Tudor mansion in the exclusive Cleveland suburb of Shaker Heights, and filled it with antiques and fine art, including a collection of Dutch masters. He bought Cadillacs, Mercedes-Benzes, and Rolls-Royces. He dressed like a conservative Wall Street banker and gave money to Jewish charities, the Cleveland Orchestra, and the Cleveland Ballet. He was active and fit, leading a daily exercise class at the downtown Y.M.C.A., where a brass plaque honored his contributions. He was usually accompanied by James (Diz) Long—a former prizefighter and football player as well as an inspector for the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections—who served as his bodyguard, assistant, and chauffeur. A sophisticated security system had been installed at Sturman's home; at his office, he kept a gun in a desk drawer.

Every year, Sturman threw a lavish Christmas party in the ballroom of a Cleveland hotel, attended by hundreds of porn magnates from all over the world, and then a New Year's Eve party in Las Vegas, where he was well known in the casinos as a high roller at craps. He made frequent trips to Chicago, Los Angeles, Hong Kong, Zurich, London, and Amsterdam to manage his business interests. He loved to disarm his opponents. When demonstrators picketed his stores, Sturman sent them

coffee and doughnuts. When federal agents staked out his house one night during a party, he walked over and invited them to come inside. Sturman had every right to feel invincible. No one in the sex industry could seriously compete with him. The government couldn't get a jury to convict him, and public demand for his products increased every year. At Sturman's peak, his companies were bringing in perhaps a million dollars a day.

Richard Rosfelder was transferred to Cleveland's I.R.S. Intelligence Division in 1975. He was hardly a typical I.R.S. agent. In college, he'd spent a lot of time partying, unsure of what he wanted to do. Now he was twenty-seven, drove a silver Corvette T-top, and thought that carrying a badge and a gun in pursuit of white-collar criminals was cool. Not long after arriving at the Intelligence Division, Rosfelder became curious about Reuben Sturman. I.R.S. offices across the country were calling with questions about him, and the I.R.S. in Cleveland knew remarkably little. The Civil Division had audited a number of Sturman's companies, but had been unable to locate their officers or directors. I.R.S. agents who visited the Sovereign News

warehouse were turned away at the door.

Rosfelder knew that Sturman's organization was doing well. One of its young employees lived in his apartment building and owned a pair of black Cadillacs. An exposé of Sturman's empire in *Cleveland* magazine described his use of Canadian nominees to avoid obscenity charges, beneath the header "How to Confuse the Feds." Rosfelder realized that the same tactics could be used to evade taxes.

Rosfelder had less than four years' experience as a criminal investigator for the I.R.S.; Sturman owned a multinational conglomerate with hundreds of companies, each filing a separate tax return. When Rosfelder asked his supervisor for permission to begin a criminal investigation, the supervisor replied, "You're out of your mind." His colleagues found the proposal unrealistic and wildly overambitious. But it also made a lot of sense. The peep booths generated enormous amounts of cash, and the revenues were difficult to track. Rosfelder had a feeling that the temptation to skim was too strong for Sturman to resist.

In 1976, Rosfelder approached Cleveland's Organized Crime Strike Force, a branch of the Justice Department,



"Personally, I prefer cremation."



"I agree—the idea of cloning humans is disgusting."

which was handling Sturman's latest obscenity case. Although federal law-enforcement bureaucracies usually guard their turf fiercely, the lead prosecutor in the case instructed an F.B.I. agent named George Grotz to help Rosfelder. Grotz handed him two three-ring binders that had been removed from Sturman's office in the 1975 raid. One binder listed the corporations that Sturman owned, the names of their stockholders, officers, and directors, their places of incorporation, and their statutory agents. The other contained details of their bank accounts, bank-signature stamps, and tax-identification numbers. And then Grotz told Rosfelder an interesting story: a few years earlier, Sturman had been arrested after trying to open two accounts at the Zurich headquarters of the Swiss Credit Bank using the name Paul Bekker and a fake Dutch passport. The arresting officer, Detective Alfred Graf, suggested that Sturman might be a drug dealer. "I'm here to hide my money in Switzerland," Sturman replied, "because I don't like to pay the tax."

"It's the same for me," Detective Graf reassured Sturman. "I also don't like to pay the tax." Graf let him go—Switzerland didn't regard tax evasion as a particularly heinous crime. In fact, its bank-secrecy laws specifically guarded the privacy of depositors from foreign tax collectors. But Graf did alert the F.B.I., which let the information languish in its files. Sturman's arrest in Zurich provided Rosfelder with one of the hardest things to demonstrate in a tax case: proof of criminal intent.

Rosfelder chose Thomas Ciehanski as the revenue agent, the numbers man, on the case. Full of high hopes and enthusiasm, they set out to confront Sturman that snowy morning in the fall of 1977, and returned to the office embarrassed at how easily they'd been duped.

When Sturman's obscenity case was tried, in 1978, Rosfelder and Ciehanski sat in the back of the Cleveland courtroom every day, trying to get a sense of the man they were after. During a break, Sturman introduced himself, and asked who they were and what they were

doing there. Rosfelder didn't feel like telling him. "We're just a couple of guys watching the trial," he said. Sturman learned their identities from an associate and, passing them in a hallway the next day, cheerfully said, "You guys look like a couple of dogs waiting for a scrap of meat."

The federal courtroom had high ceilings, wood panelling, and elegant murals on the walls. On the days that porn films were shown, the courtroom was packed. Sturman's attorney, the distinguished-looking Herald Price Fahringer, worried about this case. The material at issue was seriously hard-core. "Cake Orgy," Fahringer later admitted, was "one of the most disgusting, nauseating films you'll ever see. You'll never eat a marshmallow pie again as long as you live."

The trial lasted for a month. After a few days of deliberation, the jury found Sturman and his associates not guilty on all counts. In a highly unusual move, the jurors sent a two-and-a-half-page note to the judge, William K. Thomas, criticizing federal efforts to enforce the obscenity laws. Thomas read the note aloud to the courtroom and promised to send it to Warren Burger, Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court. Sturman was delighted, of course, calling the decision "a victory for average persons, who are interested only in reading what they want to read and seeing what they want to see." Special Agent Grotz vowed that the F.B.I.'s investigation of Sovereign News would continue anyway.

A month after Sturman won the obscenity case, Rosfelder and Ciehanski joined Cleveland's Organized Crime Strike Force, and continued to investigate Sturman. A grand jury was impanelled to issue subpoenas and to help obtain evidence. Rosfelder decided to bring Sturman to the Strike Force offices for a handwriting sample—one of the few things that he could legally compel Sturman to do. Sturman arrived wearing a cowboy hat and smoking a big cigar. He'd already faced countless F.B.I. agents, U.S. marshals, vice-squad detectives, and prosecutors. He made Rosfelder feel like a minor irritant, and behaved as though the whole meeting were a joke. Although forensic experts had assured Rosfelder that a person can never fully disguise his handwriting, Sturman

gripped the pen in his fist and scrawled illegibly. When he was asked to write clearly, he drew big block letters. Sturman left the office grinning; the handwriting samples he gave were useless.

The Cleveland grand jury issued subpoenas to Reuben Sturman's associates; to Marjorie Rollins, who had been his secretary since the mid-sixties; and to his ex-wife. None of them would provide incriminating evidence.

Next, Rosfelder decided to hunt for the "mother lode"—the Swiss bank accounts. Beginning in April, 1979, he and Ciechanski spent six months examining the bank records of Sturman's companies on microfilm in the basement of the Capital National Bank in downtown Cleveland, going through tens of thousands of cancelled checks and deposit slips, hoping to find evidence of offshore accounts.

Although Rosfelder was having no luck, his instincts were right. Anywhere from twenty-five to fifty per cent of the peep receipts—many millions of dollars—had been sent directly to Sturman. His employees called it the "cream," which they skimmed from adult bookstores on a regular basis, placing the money in safe-deposit boxes or delivering it by hand to Sturman's Cleveland office. Cash was smuggled to Europe in briefcases and suitcases. It was routinely converted into small cashier's checks to avoid federal disclosure laws, and sent overseas. Sturman maintained scores of accounts at the most prestigious banks in Zurich under an assortment of assumed names. At the Union Bank of Switzerland, he was known as Paul Schuster or as Roy C. English. At the Swiss Bank Corporation, he was Robert Butler or Robert Stern.

On his 1979 United States Individual Income Tax Return (Form 1040), Sturman declared a total taxable income, after expenses, of \$1,237. In the space allotted for overseas bank accounts, he listed none.

A typical I.R.S. criminal investigation lasts about eighteen months. As Rosfelder's inquiry entered its third year, his superiors at the I.R.S. grew impatient. He was under increasing pressure to corroborate the Swiss detective's anecdote with hard evidence that Sturman was breaking the law—or close the investigation. Friends and co-workers began to tease him. They could under-

stand why Sturman worked so hard: he was earning a fortune. But they wondered why Rosfelder spent his days in a bank basement, staring at microfilm, for an annual salary that was a fraction of what Sturman would spend on a Christmas party.

One day, in the summer of 1980, Rosfelder was taking a break from the microfilm when Ciechanski walked into his office, placed a photocopy of a cancelled check for two hundred thousand dollars on his desk, and said, "Bingo." It was drawn from the Merchants and Shipowners Bank, chartered on the Caribbean island of St. Vincent. Rosfelder and Ciechanski returned to the basement of the Capital National Bank and, later that afternoon, found three more deposits from offshore accounts.

The Merchants and Shipowners Bank, Rosfelder discovered, didn't have any offices or branches or safe-deposit boxes. The bank existed only on paper, with funds in a New York City account. Money had been transferred to it through the Union Bank of Switzerland. The paper trail led Rosfelder to one of Sturman's attorneys, who revealed how he'd helped Sturman open Swiss bank accounts, form dummy corporations, transfer assets overseas, and launder money. Now that Rosfelder knew the locations of these accounts, he needed to see what they contained, and to prove that they belonged to Reuben Sturman.

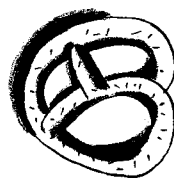
In order to examine the contents of a Swiss account, a criminal investigator had to demonstrate that the tax evader was linked to the "upper echelon of an organized criminal group." With help from the Strike Force, Rosfelder prepared a secret dossier on Sturman's alleged ties to the Cosa Nostra. If the Swiss found the allegations convincing, Rosfelder would gain crucial evidence necessary to indict Sturman for tax fraud. If Swiss authorities read the dossier and still denied access to the accounts, Rosfelder's investigation was most likely over.

Opponents of pornography had long argued that the sex industry was controlled by the Cosa Nostra. "Combining old-fashioned muscle with sizeable payoffs to cops and politicians,"

Reader's Digest asserted in 1973, "Mafia dons from coast to coast make sure that no dirty magazine, hard-core film or peep show machine enters their city without the payment of tribute to the local crime 'family.'" The F.B.I. endorsed that view, claiming in a 1978 report that pornography had become the third-largest source of income for the Cosa Nostra, exceeded only by gambling and narcotics. Other law-enforcement experts, however, later questioned the degree of Mob involvement. In 1986, President Ronald Reagan's Commission on Organized Crime listed eighteen principal sources of income for the Cosa Nostra, and pornography was not among them.

Organized-crime figures had undoubtedly been involved in the porn trade since its earliest days, operating retail stores, bankrolling hard-core film production, and extorting money from independent businessmen as often as possible. The producers of "Deep Throat"—Anthony Peraino and his two sons Joseph and Louis—had close ties to the Colombo family. Michael (Mickey) Zaffarano, Joseph Bonanno's former bodyguard, operated the national chain of Pussycat Theatres. Robert DiBernardo, a captain in the Gambino family, owned Star Distributors, the largest porn wholesaler in New York City. He was also a co-owner of the Show World Center on Forty-second Street, the city's most renowned sex emporium. DiBernardo wielded considerable influence among Mob figures in the porn trade. He was extremely handsome and polite, always impeccably dressed, and widely feared.

The evidence in the public record linking Sturman to the Cosa Nostra is inconclusive and largely anecdotal. In 1978, the F.B.I. claimed that Sturman had achieved "almost a total takeover [of the porn business] with the assistance of Robert DiBernardo," relying upon threats and intimidation. One of Sturman's business partners in Boston was Joseph Palladino, who had close ties to Raymond Patriarca's crime family. But Homer Young, a legendary F.B.I. agent who had led obscenity investigations for decades, argued that Sturman consistently fought to keep organized crime



out of the industry. In 1979, Sturman testified against Cosa Nostra members in a California trial. He said that two men had approached him in front of the Cleveland Y.M.C.A., threatened him with "serious trouble," and demanded payments of twenty thousand dollars a month, which he refused to make. Sturman's testimony helped to destroy the crime family of Los Angeles don Dominic Brooklier. An F.B.I. informer, however, subsequently claimed that Sturman could safely ignore the threats of L.A. mobsters because he was paying hundreds of thousands of dollars to more powerful New York mobsters for protection.

From all appearances, DiBernardo and Sturman were on amicable terms. Every year, DiBernardo attended the Sovereign News Christmas party in Cleveland. The exact nature of their business relationship remains unknown. William P. Kelly, a retired F.B.I. agent who investigated obscenity cases and got to know DiBernardo well, doesn't believe that Sturman served as a front man for the Cosa Nostra. Did Sturman ever make payments to the Gambino crime family? Kelly says he wouldn't be surprised either way.

In the early nineteen-eighties, Swiss authorities granted Rosfelder access to Sturman's accounts—but Reuben Sturman's name didn't appear on any of them, or on any of the signature cards authorizing withdrawals. Rosfelder was certain that these were the right accounts, but he needed a sample of Sturman's handwriting to prove it. Sturman was brought to the Strike Force offices two more times, but on each occasion he scrawled illegibly for hours. Rosfelder derived some pleasure from the second visit, however. Instead of asking Sturman to copy sentences from the standard handwriting test, he told him to write the names Roy C. English, Robert Butler, Robert Stern, and other pseudonyms over and over. When Sturman realized that his Swiss bank accounts had been discovered, his mood soured considerably.

During this period, Sturman continued to run his businesses and enjoy his wealth. He courted and then married Naomi Delgado, a beautiful young singer who had released an album of

Spanish hip-hop. They later had a daughter. As pressure from the I.R.S. investigation mounted, Sturman told friends that he was planning to retire and spend more time in Van Nuys, California, where he had a house.

Sturman decided to sell his companies to their top managers, but he faced an unusual dilemma: how do you sell something that, technically, you don't own? The problem was resolved, as always, with a clever legal stratagem. When Sturman transferred ownership to the managers, they hired him to serve as a "consultant." Sturman appeared to be handing power to a younger generation and fading into the background. Rosfelder thought that these consulting agreements were just another method of deploying nominees.

Sturman knew that the I.R.S. might now have the evidence it needed for a successful prosecution, but he was by no means ready to concede defeat. He began collecting important documents from his files, which hadn't been stored at his office since the F.B.I. raids in 1975. These records were kept in his lawyer's office, in the garage at his accountant's mother's house, and in his housekeeper's basement amid paint cans and old clothes. Files that might contain information useful to the government were separated from the rest. "I'll probably regret this," Sturman joked to his secretary, Marjorie Rollins, as he started shredding documents. A second round of shredding lasted for three weeks. An entirely new set of business records was created, backdated, and shipped to Sturman's various companies across the United States.

Rosfelder travelled to London, Zurich, New York, and Los Angeles, collecting evidence and assembling witnesses to testify before a grand jury. He got peep-show repairmen, store managers, and company accountants to testify. One by one, Sturman's trusted aides began to cooperate with the government, as loyalty gave way to the fear of long prison terms. A number of these people had been employed by Sturman for decades.

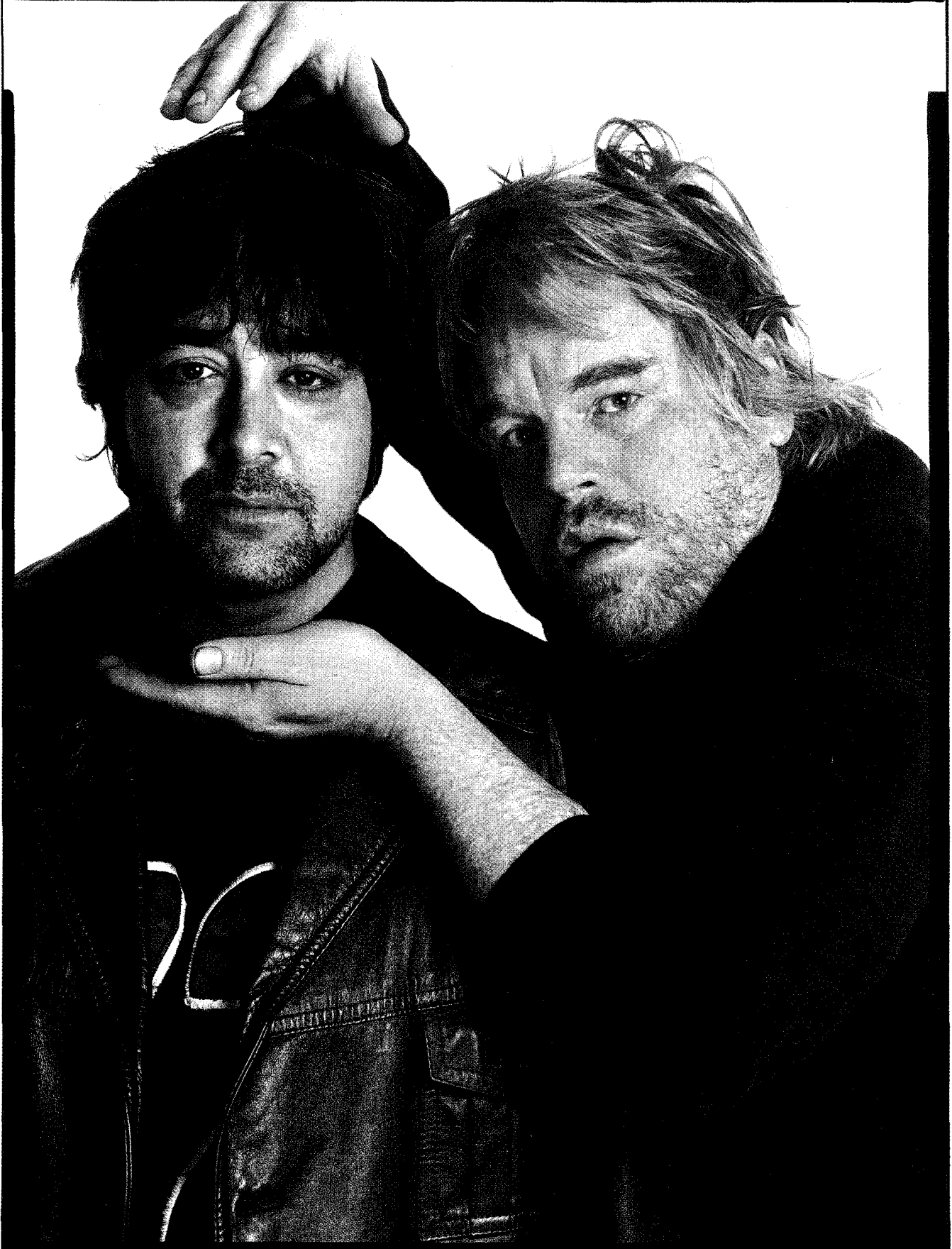
On June 28, 1985, Attorney General Edwin Meese III announced that a Cleveland grand jury had indicted Reuben Sturman on one count of conspiring to defraud the government, one

count of obstructing justice, five counts of income-tax evasion, five counts of filing false returns, and four counts of currency reporting and foreign-bank-account violations. The government accused Sturman of failing to pay more than three million dollars in personal income tax between 1978 and 1982, of funnelling more than seven million dollars through foreign bank accounts, and of destroying and concealing evidence that had been subpoenaed. He faced a maximum of seventy-five years in prison and large fines.

Rosfelder thought that Sturman had probably failed to report at least ten times the amount of income specified in the indictment. It was important, however, to seek only charges that could easily be proved. If jurors doubted one accusation, they might begin to doubt the others.

Sturman was arrested in Los Angeles and held on a three-million-dollar cash bond, which he paid with little difficulty. A team of attorneys led by J. Michael Murray immediately attacked the indictment. During the next few years, hundreds of motions were filed contesting the legality of the government's investigation. Thomas Ciehanski left the I.R.S., frustrated by the delays and sure that Sturman would never go on trial. Sturman's attorneys argued that he had no links to the Cosa Nostra that could possibly justify violating the privacy of his accounts. "I am not now and never have been a member of organized crime," Sturman swore in an affidavit. "Nor have I ever taken part in any of the activities of organized crime." One person who might have vouched for him, Robert DiBernardo, was unavailable to testify. He had made the mistake of telling jokes about John Gotti, and, in May, 1986, was shot twice in the back of the head by a friend, while waiting for a cup of coffee in Sammy (the Bull) Gravano's Coney Island office. His body was never recovered. According to one federal agent, it was put through a tree shredder.

As the motions and appeals made their way through Swiss and American courts, Sturman was again indicted on federal obscenity charges, this time in Las Vegas. In October, 1987, he was charged under the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations



PORTRAIT BY RICHARD AVEDON *Stephen Adly Guirgis and Philip Seymour Hoffman, the writer and the director of "Our Lady of 121st Street," which has moved to the Union Square Theatre, Off Broadway, after an Off Off Broadway run.*

Act (RICO), which the Reagan Administration had broadened to include obscenity violations. He faced a possible fifty-five-year prison sentence, the forfeiture of assets, and a two-million-dollar fine. The material at issue in the case was as hard-core as anything on the market: videotapes depicting torture, urination and defecation during sexual activity, and men and women having sex with animals.

The tax-evasion trial began in September, 1989, more than four years after the original indictment. "This is not a pornography or an obscenity case," the head prosecutor said in his opening remarks. "This is a tax case."

J. Michael Murray argued that his client's behavior had to be viewed in light of the government's unrelenting efforts to destroy an innocent man's livelihood. "These acts of concealment," he said, "were done as a matter of self-defense and preservation." Sturman wasn't a criminal; he was an ambitious businessman caught in the midst of a cultural war.

Sturman knew that his prospects in the trial weren't good, but he seemed to be in high spirits. He often arrived at the courthouse in Groucho Marx disguise—false eyebrows and big eyeglasses and a plastic nose—to hide his face from photographers. Day after day, his wife, Naomi Delgado, appeared in the courtroom wearing low-cut blouses and short skirts. As Marjorie Rollins, now Sturman's former secretary, prepared to testify, Sturman said from the defendant's box, "Marjorie, you just forgot everything you ever said." Judge George W. White admonished him, and Sturman promised that it was only a joke, not a threat; he'd be much more careful in the future. Rollins told the court that she had selected names from her favorite novels to list as the officers of Sturman's companies. A. Robert Dostal, one of Sturman's accountants and a graduate of Harvard Business School, revealed his method of finding nominees. "My approach," he said, "was to take the white pages of the telephone book and just flip it open." After choosing a name, Dostal would add it to corporate records, tax returns, and bank accounts, without ever notifying

the person in the phone book that he or she had legally become a top executive in Reuben Sturman's porn empire.

On November 17, 1989, Sturman was found guilty of every charge, from tax evasion to conspiracy to defraud the government. It had been twenty-five years since the government's first attempt to convict Sturman of a felony.

Judge White sentenced him to ten years in prison and imposed \$2.5 million in fines, but allowed Sturman to remain free, pending appeal, on a million-dollar cash bond.

The Las Vegas obscenity trial ended with a deadlocked jury in October, 1991, and the judge was forced to declare a mistrial. "The government had no case against me from Day One," Sturman told reporters from behind a surgical mask. But when the prosecutors vowed to seek a new trial, Sturman agreed to cut a deal, pleading guilty to one RICO violation and seven obscenity offenses. In return, the government allowed his tax and obscenity sentences to be served concurrently. Sturman asked to be sent to the minimum-security federal prison near Boron, California, in the Mojave Desert, a few hours from his family in Los Angeles. His request was granted.

On June 10, 1992, Judge Lloyd D. George sentenced Sturman to four years in prison and fined him a million dollars. Rosfelder sat in the Las Vegas courtroom watching as Sturman was handcuffed and led away by U.S. marshals.

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In the fall of 1992, the I.R.S. was having some difficulty collecting the back taxes that Sturman owed. But, for the first time, Sturman seemed remorseful. After spending nearly six months in prison, he wrote to Judge White apologizing for his actions and pleading for a reduction of his sentence, so that he wouldn't miss his daughter's childhood. "I thought I could outwit the U.S. government," Sturman wrote on December 1, 1992. "This was stupid on my part." His request was denied, and a week later, on the night of December 7th, he jogged across the prison's softball field, hopped over a low fence, and climbed into the back seat of a car that was waiting with the door

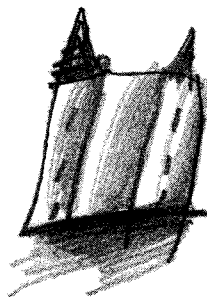
open. The driver was Douglas Friedman, the brother of Sturman's new secretary, Stephanie Friedman. As they were driving, Sturman spotted an In-N-Out hamburger stand along the highway and told Friedman to stop. The prison food had been lousy. As they waited in the drive-through line, a sheriff pulled up right behind them in a squad car. Friedman began to panic, but Sturman told him to relax: if the sheriff had any idea who they were, they would already have been arrested. Sturman got his hamburger, and they drove off.

When Sturman wasn't present for the 9 P.M. bed check, prison authorities began to search for him in the Mojave Desert. At midnight, they alerted U.S. marshals in Los Angeles, who warned customs officials at the nation's airports and border crossings that Sturman might try to flee the country.

The following day, Rosfelder was having lunch with a couple of reporters at a Cleveland restaurant when his beeper went off. He had finally closed his file on Sturman and was working on some new criminal cases. He excused himself from the table, called his office, and was told that Reuben Sturman had escaped from prison. Rosfelder hung up the phone and said to himself, "This guy is amazing."

Sturman's war with the U.S. government hadn't ended with his indictment or even with his imprisonment. After being convicted of tax evasion, he had terminated the consulting agreements with his former managers, so that the I.R.S. couldn't get any of the money. He had instructed the managers to pay him in cash or—if they felt uncomfortable with that arrangement—to assign the consulting deals to offshore corporations. To hide personal expenditures from the I.R.S., Sturman had made all of his purchases with a Visa card issued by a Swiss bank, using funds from a Panamanian company. When the I.R.S. seized the contents of his Cleveland home and later seized his house in Van Nuys, Sturman surreptitiously bought them back at government auctions, for a pittance, through foreign corporations.

While Sturman was at Boron, he was still earning at least a hundred and fifty thousand dollars a month.



Stephanie Friedman handled the financial arrangements, depositing funds at banks in Switzerland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Aruba, and the Cayman Islands. Some of Sturman's associates, however, no longer wanted to fight the government. They now thought that tax cases posed the greatest threat to their businesses. Even those who wanted to keep paying their old boss were scared, caught between the demands of Reuben Sturman and those of the I.R.S. When a number of his old managers stopped paying him, Sturman felt outraged and betrayed. These were people he'd made rich. Now they were stealing from him, acting like real owners instead of employees. First he made emotional appeals to them; then he made threats. When the owner of an adult bookstore in Phoenix paid Sturman only half of what was allegedly owed, he hired a gang to destroy the store's peep booths with sledgehammers and baseball bats. Full payment promptly resumed. The same gang was contracted to knock out the peep machines at adult bookstores in Chicago. The plan went horribly wrong. The thugs used crude, radio-controlled explosive devices; two of the bombs inadvertently went off, setting fire to the gang's rented Chevrolet and killing one of the bombers.

Sturman realized that if federal investigators linked him to the extortion attempt, he might face a life sentence without parole. Moreover, his efforts to get out of prison early had been unsuccessful. He had paid more than half a million dollars in a bid to bribe Judge White, hoping to buy a sentence reduction. The payments had been made to Sanford Atkin, a Cleveland attorney who claimed to be a close friend of White's. Instead of bribing the judge—who had no knowledge of the scheme—Atkin had kept all the money, investing in certificates of deposit, paying clients whom he'd bilked,

making loans to friends, buying real estate and a car wash in Cleveland. Once it became clear to Sturman that he'd been conned, a backup plan went into effect. He didn't want to die in prison, and had already instructed Stephanie Friedman to open a Los Angeles bank account for a new company, Escape, Inc.

Rosfelder had worried for years that Sturman might go on the run rather than serve time in prison. But, again and again, Sturman had proved him wrong. During the four years between his indictment and his tax-evasion trial, Sturman left the United States twenty-one times, but faithfully returned from every trip. Thomas Ciechanski thought Sturman had gone to Spain, where extradition might be difficult to arrange. Rosfelder pictured Sturman on a beach, halfway across the world, sipping a cold drink and smoking

a cigar. Given his wealth and connections, he could have gone anywhere.

The government has never revealed exactly how it found Sturman. On February 9, 1993, at 7:30 A.M., three U.S. marshals entered a small apartment in Anaheim, California, with a pass key. "Hey, Rube!" one of them yelled, startling Sturman, who was alone and asleep in bed. On a nearby dresser, there was a loaded gun in an open briefcase. Sturman raised his hands and surrendered. He had chosen to hide out a few miles from Disneyland.

Sturman thought that Stephanie Friedman had turned him in. She and her brother were at the Cleveland offices of the Organized Crime Strike Force on the morning he was captured. But, according to Rosfelder, who had subpoenaed them, the Friedmans had been prepared to lie about Sturman's whereabouts. It was only after hearing the news of his arrest that they changed



N. Clr

their minds and started to talk. Stephanie Friedman told Rosfelder about Sturman's ongoing efforts to avoid paying the I.R.S., his attempts to bribe Judge White, his role in the Chicago bombing, his escape plans. And, while Rosfelder was reeling from those revelations, she told him that Sturman and his wife had tampered with the jury during the tax-evasion trial. The suggestive outfits that Naomi Delgado had worn to court were part of an attempt to seduce a juror.

For days in that Cleveland courtroom, Delgado had smiled and winked at one of the male jurors, an auto mechanic in his early twenties. The juror had no idea that she was the defendant's wife. During a recess, someone handed the juror a note with the address of a restaurant, an appointed time, and a lipstick kiss. He met Delgado for dinner, but when she began to discuss the case, and suggested that Sturman was innocent, he became uneasy. After the meal, she gave him a ride in a Mercedes driven by Sturman's bodyguard. She flirted with him in the back seat and kissed him on the cheek; he quickly got out of the car at his parents' house, where he still lived. He refused to meet Delgado again, dodged her subsequent phone calls, and voted to convict Sturman on all counts.

Although the jury-tampering scheme sounded wild, far-fetched, and unlikely

to succeed, hearing about it made Rosfelder feel slightly ill. More than three years had passed since the tax trial, and the young juror had never said a word to the authorities about his dinner and his conversations with Sturman's wife. The plan was so crazy, Rosfelder thought, that it could have worked.

Stephanie and Douglas Friedman cooperated fully with the government. In return for their testimony, no charges were filed against them. They were later given new identities and relocated through the Justice Department's Witness Protection Program.

The Friedmans led investigators to a storage unit in Van Nuys, where Sturman's latest financial records were hidden, and Rosfelder soon found himself immersed once again in the minutiae of offshore corporations and Swiss bank accounts. One of the documents that Stephanie Friedman provided was an eight-page list, in Sturman's handwriting, of the people who were still sending him money. The list included some of the most prominent names in the porn industry. Within weeks of Sturman's capture, the I.R.S. raised the amount of the back taxes that he owed to more than twenty-nine million dollars, making him perhaps the largest individual tax evader in American history. Rosfelder went down the list, contacting Sturman's associates, inform-

ing them that their checks should now be made out to the Internal Revenue Service.

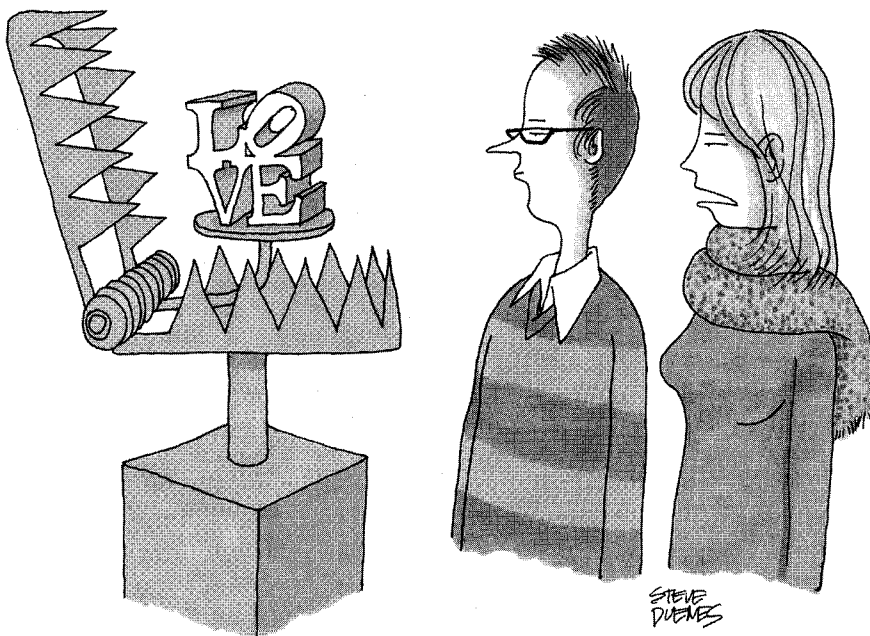
On June 17, 1994, Sturman was given a nineteen-year prison sentence for the Chicago extortion attempt. The judge refused to impose a large fine, as demanded by the government. Sturman told the court that he was now penniless. "All I've got is my prison commissary account," he said, "and I defy anyone to prove otherwise."

Rosfelder retired from the I.R.S. in 1995 and became a private investigator, specializing in white-collar crime. He acknowledges that Sturman may have hidden millions of dollars that the I.R.S. never found but prefers not to dwell on the possibility. "That would make my investigation seem like it didn't really get to the heart of the matter," Rosfelder said. "And I don't want that to be the case."

Reuben Sturman spent a year at a maximum-security prison in Lompoc, California, before being transferred to F.C.I. Manchester, a medium-security prison in Kentucky. He and Naomi Delgado had divorced, and few of his old friends from the sex industry bothered to visit him. The Clinton Administration had largely abandoned efforts to enforce the nation's obscenity laws, and pornography had become widely available, mainstream entertainment. The sort of films that Sturman had repeatedly been indicted for selling were now being distributed by some of America's largest cable, satellite, and hotel companies, which were earning several hundred million dollars a year from adult entertainment. Sturman increasingly seemed like a relic from a shady era that most industry figures wanted to forget.

When I visited F.C.I. Manchester in 1996, the place looked more like a corporate headquarters than like a penitentiary, with cheery postmodern architecture, atriums, skylights, and white walls. Sturman arrived promptly for our meeting, crossing the prison grounds briskly, wearing khaki work clothes and new sneakers. Now seventy-one, his hair and his beard were gray, though his eyebrows were dark brown.

We talked for hours about how he'd formed various companies, fought nu-



"Somehow I remember this one differently."

merous obscenity battles, built his empire, and then lost it. He spoke bitterly about the U.S. government and its tactics dating back to "Sex Life of a Cop." "They were scum," he said of the federal agents. Fifteen years after the I.R.S. gained access to his Swiss accounts, Sturman still felt indignant about the entire episode, as though he had been cheated out of something that was rightfully his. "Rosfelder's a horrible man," he said. He leaned across the conference table in the small room where we met. "Rosfelder lied to the federal government. He lied to the Swiss government. He lied to everybody." The information about the Cosa Nostra that Rosfelder submitted to the Swiss was "nonsense." Sturman said that he had never paid the Gambino family "any money in any way, shape, or form." Rosfelder had made the whole thing up "out of whole cloth."

I brought up Robert DiBernardo. "He was one of my customers," Sturman said. "Not one of the bigger ones at all. I knew DiBernardo as a business acquaintance, not as a friend. He seemed to be a nice fellow. I didn't know he was in organized crime for the first ten years we did business. His two partners were Jewish. His first wife was Jewish. His second wife was Jewish. His kids went to Hebrew school. I thought DiBernardo was Jewish. I really thought he was Jewish—until I had my eyes opened. But that had nothing to do with me, anyway. Gotti's people shot him, and he disappeared from the face of the earth." Sturman claimed that his own life had been threatened many times by hoodlums, and that he always told them the same thing: "Do whatever you have to. But get out of my sight."

Sturman's mood sank as the conversation turned to more recent events. When I asked for some explanation of the extortion attempts, his answer was brief and matter-of-fact: "Those people owed me money. They refused to pay me. And so we went into one of their stores and we broke up the store, to send them a message. Sure enough, they started paying me again." He laughed. "I thought it was very nice of them."

I asked Sturman why he didn't leave the country after his escape. "I thought being in a big city was the easiest way



"Your French is correct, sir—that item is a sneaker filled with gasoline."

to get lost," he replied. "And I would've been free and clear if I'd just kept my mouth shut and not gone to see my family . . . I just couldn't see myself leaving for Europe or Asia . . . I figured if I stayed in L.A., and stayed away from everybody I knew there, I'd be fine. But I couldn't stay away from my wife and child."

At one point, Sturman had offered to give the government twelve million dollars. But the government didn't seem interested. "Oh, they hate my guts. I'm a public enemy," he said. Aside from this money, apparently owed to him by various associates, Sturman swore that he was broke. He spent most of his time in prison reading fiction. Few of the other inmates had any idea who he was or how he came to be there.

When our time was up, I walked with Sturman and a prison official into a large courtyard, with footpaths and a well-tended lawn. Sturman shook my hand and said to the prison official,

"Show this young fellow to the door," as though the official were his personal assistant. Without waiting for a response, Sturman turned and walked away.

On October 27, 1997, Reuben Sturman died at a prison hospital in Lexington, Kentucky. A spokeswoman said the cause of death was "heart and kidney failure." Although the *Washington Post* ran a brief obituary, neither the *New York Times* nor any of the major television networks reported Sturman's death. The most heartfelt epitaph was offered by the *Chattanooga Free Press*. "The smut lord is dead," the paper noted on its editorial page. "But the evil he and his court-coddled colleagues have done—the degradation of our nation's culture and the corruption of our youth—lives on." After a traditional Jewish funeral, attended by a handful of family members, Reuben Sturman was buried in a small town south of San Francisco. ♦

FICTION

CHRISTIE

BY CAITLIN MACY



When you met Christie for the first time, it took only minutes to learn that she was from Greenwich, Connecticut, but months could go by before you got another solid fact out of her. After a couple of years in New York, she realized that she had to give people a little more information to stop them wondering, so once she'd mentioned Greenwich she would quickly add that she'd gone to "the high school," meaning the public one. The first time she said this, you'd find her forthrightness refreshing—disarming, even, in the midst of so many pretenders. You'd be prompted, perhaps, to admit something about yourself—the fact that you were doing Jenny Craig, for instance, and had to sneak the packaged food into your office microwave when no one was paying attention. But then you'd overhear Christie making the same confession to someone else, and it would lose its charm. It was just Fact No. 2, which, added to Fact No. 1—her childhood in Greenwich—represented the sum total of what could be stated about Christie Thorn's background, about her entire life before college and New York.

Plus, you couldn't help being suspicious of her motives in revealing Fact No. 2. If, at a party, a group of people were standing around, sharing a corner of the room, and someone made an opening bid—mentioning Hotchkiss or St. George's, say—Christie would always pointedly interject, "Oh, I wouldn't know. I went to public school. Greenwich High. That's right—I was a good old suburban kid." Of course, Christie and the person who had mentioned boarding school were doing the same thing—preemptively defending themselves against attack—and yet you were tempted to give the Hotchkiss guy a free pass. With him, you could figure that his parents had divorced badly, or his mother was an alcoholic, or his brother had committed suicide (or perhaps it really had been an accidental overdose), or that in keeping with the family tradition Dad had gone crazy and now spent his days in slippers and a robe shooting intricate, archaic forms of pool. On account of one or more of these family problems, the young man felt insecure about himself as an individual, and so, in situations of social challenge, he mentioned boarding school a little too

early, and a little unnaturally, to shore up his resolve. Still, whatever his problem, whatever the big bad family secret, it was just the slightly burned edge on a cake that everyone still wanted to eat. How bad could those family problems really be, you'd asked yourself more than once, if, at the same time, you had a house on the Vineyard? How bad—if you had the gray shingles, the weathered shutters, the slanting attic roof, the iron bedstead, the needlepoint pillows proclaiming, "A woman's place is on the tennis court!", the *batterie de cuisine* of lobster pots and potato mashers from the forties, and the octagonal kitchen window, through which you could glimpse the dunes and smell the salt air—could anything really be?

Meanwhile, you'd assume that Christie had more to protect, that her history was more embarrassing, somehow: a chronological downsizing of suburban homes (all of them, albeit, technically still in Greenwich), a cheapness in things like bedding and glassware, or four people sharing one bathroom with a standup shower. And you wouldn't be wrong. The real story was simple, of course, simple and unnecessarily sad. Christie's father had gone into business for himself and had cash-flow problems. That was all. No one had murdered anyone; there wasn't a whiff of incest or abuse, embezzlement or even tax fraud. Mr. Thorn had owed money his whole life, but he paid his bills more or less on time, and, when he died, his life-insurance policy would pay off the mortgage on the house. He was an honest man with a clean conscience.

Yet Christie's conscience was not clean, and seemed never to have been. In a typical scenario from her adolescence, her father would plan a nice vacation for the family, then wouldn't have enough cash to cover it, Christie would throw a tantrum, and her mother, who spoiled her, would somehow find the money to appease her. Christie would go on the vacation, but she would go alone, with a similarly spoiled friend. She and the friend would go helling around Key West, say, or Miami Beach, feeling worse and worse and worse and laughing harder and harder. And then, and this was the kicker, Christie's mother would pick them up at LaGuardia (the friend's mother could never be both-

ered) and would want to know—would have been anxious about, primordially concerned about—whether they'd had a good time.

On the way back from one of these vacations when she was sixteen or seventeen, Christie and her friend checked in late and were bumped up to first class. They were separated, and Christie was seated next to a distinguished-looking older man. He drank Scotches and read a golf magazine, and, when the flight was delayed, the two became partners in peevish complaint, the man turning to Christie to include her in his "Can you believe this?" glare. Eventually, he asked her where she was from, and when she said, "Greenwich," he looked at her with a kind of absolute approval that she couldn't recall ever having inspired before. After that, whenever a flight of hers was delayed she'd shake her head and say, "Time to spare, go by air," as the Scotch-drinking man had, and when she met people she liked to make sure that they knew where she was from.

After college, after a prolonged phase of running around New York while drifting through a series of support jobs at big firms, and after she had slept with, I think, either fifty-five or sixty-five men, Christie found someone to marry. We spent a lot of time speculating as to who would be invited to the wedding (only a strange, angry girl named Mary McLean, who had made some Faustian bargain with Christie long before any of us met her, considered herself one of Christie's *real* friends), but in the end everyone was invited—and to the Pierre, no less. Throughout the evening, Christie wore a look of incurable dissatisfaction. Her face was gaudily made up, as if for a school play or an ice-skating competition. At the reception, her parents seemed frightened. It was as if they had been instructed to keep their mouths shut at all costs. A guest would shake Mrs. Thorn's hand in the receiving line and say, "Hi, I'm Jen Ryan. Christie and I were roommates at Trinity?" and Mrs. Thorn would nod, grim-faced, and say—literally—nothing. The groom's name was Thomas Bruewald, and he was gawky and tall, with an oversized head and a unibrow. His par-

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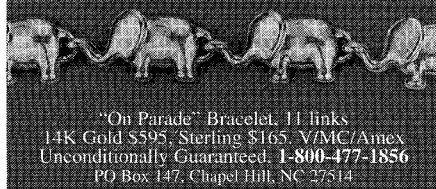
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ents were never identified. Apparently they were foreign. He had grown up half over here and half over there—in Bavaria, was it? Or Croatia? At any rate, it wasn't Umbria or Aix or anywhere worth trying to lock in an invitation for. Bruewald had gone to one of those Euro institutes with the word "polytechnical" in the name. The champagne at the reception was a little too good, and some people had more than their fill and, by the end of the night, were making rude remarks. One guy said that Christie's parents must have taken out a second mortgage to pay for the wedding. "Didn't know you could get a second mortgage on a trailer," somebody else said. And then, of course, you got "Hey, wait a minute! There are no trailers"—the crowd in unison—"in Greenwich, Connecticut!" But nobody said that the groom was funny-looking. You could pick on Christie for trying too hard, you could note the moment when Mr. Thorn took off his tuxedo jacket and started doing body shots with the bridesmaids, but you didn't pick on the groom's looks. You just didn't go there.

Christie herself was quite pretty. She had large, unflawed features and blond hair that was only a shade or two lighter than her natural color. She was also thin. And, in an age when Manhattan had been overrun by the kind of chain stores you'd find at a suburban mall, these attributes had kept her in dates for a decade and the word "beautiful" had been lobbed over her head with surprising—to some of us, disturbing—frequency.

The groom had some kind of science-related job—engineering or drug research—that required a reverse commute to New Jersey. And, once the wedding was over, once the gift had been ordered (they had registered for everything but the kitchen sink, in anticipation, evidently, of dinners for sixteen at which oysters would be served and finger bowls required), once the thank-you note from Christie—Christie Bruewald now—had arrived, it seemed that only the sparsest smattering of social interactions was indicated, coffee or a drink twice a year. There was even some thought that the newlyweds would move out of the city. Christie had always talked non-stop about chil-

dren (little trophies, one presumed, to fill up that bottomless pit of dissatisfaction), and the suburbs had been mentioned more than once.

Christie's new thing, at our biannual meetings, was to brag about her visits to Thomas's family in Europe. It was mystifying—one would not have thought an "in" in the former East Germany particularly brag-worthy, and, in any case, everyone at the wedding had seen how cowed the guy was, how classic the trade they had made. Did she think we didn't see her boasts for what they were? She started to slip into conversation the fact that Thomas's uncle had a title, or had had one—she was vague on the details—and she mentioned that there was a castle in the family. Her Christmas card (sent yearly to all of us, even though we had not sent one to her in years) introduced the Bruewald family crest. It was all so ludicrous and pathetic, really, when they were living in a studio in a high-rise on York Avenue.

"So why do you even see her?" my husband would ask. (I was married now, too.) "If she's so awful, why don't you dump her? Just don't call back." Like most men, he had no patience with these pseudo-friendships between women that drag on for years. The question bothered me, and in my head I came up with three reasons that I continued to see Christie Bruewald, née Thorn, at six-month intervals. First, I enjoyed taking note of her pretensions. I enjoyed seeing how far she would go. In a way, I had exulted in the family-crest Christmas card. I had put it up on the refrigerator and shown it to everyone who came over. I was dying, now, to see what would follow. When I met her for coffee, I went prepared with a mental tape recorder to catch her appalling lapses in taste—not so much for myself as to pass on to everyone else. Second, there were, I have to admit, sparks of humanity in Christie's pretensions, and in her desires, that I felt were missing in the rest of my life. She had coveted a huge diamond ring. She had hoped to land a guy with money. She had wanted her wedding to be an extravaganza, a day she'd remember for the rest of her life. She wasn't "over it." She wasn't over anything. She knew what she wanted, and she wanted the kinds of things that

the marketers of luxury goods describe as “the best”—Jacuzzis, chandeliers, access to the tropics in the middle of winter. Third, and finally, what got me, I suppose, were the indications of humanity in Christie’s life that had nothing to do with her pretensions. The family crest on the Christmas card had been embossed onto a picture of the Bruewalds and their new baby in matching red-and-green velvet outfits. The little girl looked exactly like Thomas—an odd-featured brown-haired old man. She wouldn’t have the advantage of Christie’s looks, and, for someone as entranced by the superficial as Christie was, that must have been hard to take. You could say that I felt sorry for her.

Still, despite my three reasons, a year or so after my own wedding I went through a period when I felt it was important to burn the fat from my life. Christie had begun to represent all that was wrong with New York—which, as usual, meant what I was tired of in myself. I wrote “Seeing people like Christie Thorn” on a list of things that were a waste of time, and when she called and left a message to start the back-and-forth that would culminate in our having lunch a few weeks later, I didn’t call back.

Perhaps I ended it then simply because the interesting part appeared to be over. Though my own life still seemed to me a fount of infinite promise, hers felt blandly curtailed. I realized that there was a part of me that had almost wanted her to make it, on her own terms, whatever they might be. The sad thing about Christie’s wedding was that it hadn’t been outrageous at all; it had been just another overpriced New York wedding spearheaded by a bride with too much makeup on. I found it all too easy to imagine how her story would continue, how, inevitably, it would end. I lived with that story, kept the thread going in my mind, and added to it from time to time, when some event in my own life recalled Christie’s unhappy mixture of envy and drive, of self-promotion and apology.

My version (wholly fictional) went something like this: Having married for money, Christie quickly discovers that she hasn’t married for enough. Realizing her mistake only deepens the dissatisfaction she feels with her life, and, in

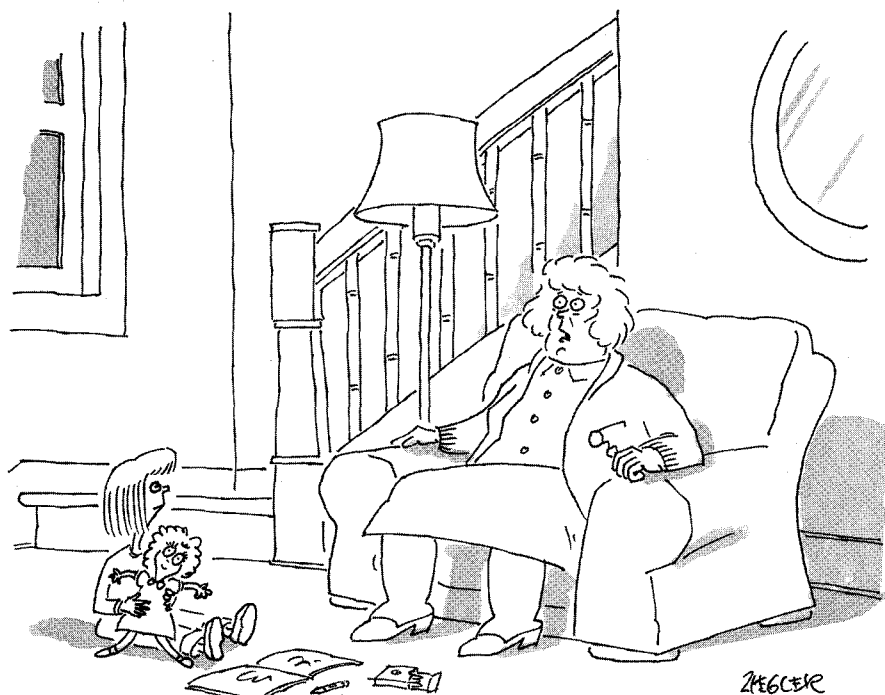
order to convince herself that... still change, she has an innocuous little affair in the first six months of her marriage. The second affair, a year later, is not so innocuous. Thomas is doing as well as he ever has, but this is New York, and after their second child the Bruewalds are unable to afford a big enough apartment in the city and they make the move to the suburbs. (For Christie, Brooklyn, or a bohemian setup with the baby in the living room, has never been an option.) They buy a starter house in one of the less well-known towns of Westchester. They socialize a lot and their favorite friends are people like themselves, but who make a little less than they do, and are jealous of them for some other reason as well—Christie’s having lost the weight after her pregnancies, say. The kids are the usual product of a marriage like the Bruewalds’. They suffer from Christie’s frustrated ambition and their father’s subservience to it, and they end up angry and self-hating beneath a surface of entitlement. But the European influence helps to normalize them somewhat, and at least they know how to ski. When the children are grown and out of the house, Christie starts spending most of her time down at the time-share in Cancún,

I... afraid to be...

That would be... It would end in a sorry, g... age, marked by an incivility to se... people (flight attendants, doctors’ secretaries) and a dye job that wasn’t what it used to be.

It was what she deserved, wasn’t it? There is order in things, and people who spend a hundred grand on a wedding they can’t afford simply not to lose face should pay in some way. Who was she kidding?

It will be clear from my iteration of Christie’s excesses that, as a couple, my husband and I have always prided ourselves on living within our means. When the time comes for us to move into a bigger apartment, we understand that staying in the city will mean living at the back of a building, in interior rooms that open onto shaftways. So it’s only for kicks, just to see what we’re missing, that we ask our broker to show us something fancy. We go prepared to look, to smile wistfully, and to depart, understanding that by any reasonable standards we have more than enough,



“Grandma had a favorite doll when she was your age. But, with no explanation, that doll was taken away from her and sent to live with some cousins in Wichita.”

things can
spouses never alone.
battering other "party people," whose
about the size of it.
rasping old
vice

He'll
in love
we cannot
thing at all. It
than the others
we've lo... and costs more by ...
oh, about a hundred grand. Where are
our wistful smiles now? Where is our
comfort in reasonable standards? It is
clear that we—and only we—are capa-
ble of fully appreciating the charm of
this place. Who but we would actually
enjoy the fact that the stove and the
refrigerator appear, like the building,
to be prewar? Who but we would keep
the sixties-style wallpaper in the maid's
room? (The ghost of Christie Thorn
shakes her head in annoyance at the
broker: "Total gut job in the kitchen!"
"No closet space!" "No wet bar!") And
then there is our daughter and the door-
man, who is pretending to play hide-
and-seek with her, while we stand word-
less in the marble lobby, looking out at
the green of the Park, doing sums in
our head, reconsidering decisions of the
past, decisions that might have netted
us this apartment, pure and simple.

Because now nothing else will do.

The apartment is at the breaking
point of our price range, and though on
paper we can swing it, our broker calls
that night with bad news: he's shopped
us to the board, and they are reluctant
to consider anyone whose liquid assets
are as low as ours. That fast, it's over.
We have been slotted into position. We
know—and can laugh bitterly at the no-
tion that this knowledge, in other cir-
cumstances, is supposed to be comfort-
ing—exactly where we are.

A week after the bad news, I walk
by the building, daughterless this time.
A man emerges, then two schoolgirls
in uniform. I put my sunglasses on to
hide the fact that I am staring in an ugly,
covetous way. How tortured and un-
pleasant I must look compared with the
woman my age who comes out next,
well dressed, well coiffed, followed by

a boy, who are
two nannies. For
moment, I mistake the
older, more sophisticated
horn. Out of habit I am pre-
g not to see even this twin of hers
the way you ignore a man in a bar who
resembles your ex-boyfriend), when the
doorman's greeting rings out—yes, as
if in a dream—"Mrs. Bruewald." "Hi,
Lester." He asks how long she will be,
and the woman says, "Oh, an hour or
two. We're just going to go to the Park
and do some shopping before Daddy
gets home."

In a vile moment of Darwinian sur-
vival, I paste a smile on my face, and I
call out, "Christie?"

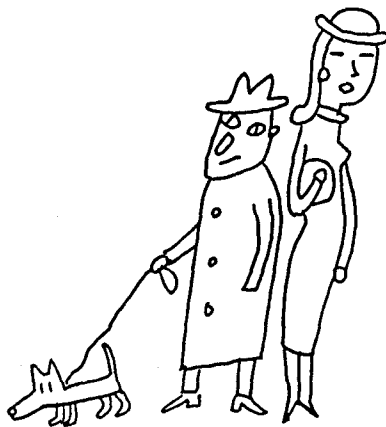
We went to an Italian restaurant
on Madison. Kids and nannies
were dispatched to the Park. It was an
off hour, three or four o'clock, and I
remember I almost hated to dirty one
of the white linen tablecloths, which
were already set for dinner. We started
with cappuccinos, then moved on to
glasses of the house white. Later, when
we got hungry, the waiter brought an-
tipasto and some bread, and to wash it
down I had another glass of white wine
and Christie switched to red. I was
longing for a cigarette, and eventually I
asked her, "Do you still smoke?" "My
God, I'm dying for one," she said, and
took a pack out of her purse. We each
smoked two.

I should explain that it was one of
those surreally springlike days at the tail
end of winter, the kind of afternoon
when you flirt with the mailman, the
coffee-cart man, and the busboy, when
you long for a new pair of open-toed
sandals and a good excuse to sit in a
café all afternoon, ignoring your respon-

sibilities and getting drunk. Well, we
had one. There was catching up to be
done—husbands, children, careers, in
a nutshell.

From the beginning, I was drinking
rather fast. All the information-sharing,
I realized, was making me uneasy. I, who
used to rattle off insouciantly all the
good things that had happened to me,
was guarded now. I had something to
protect, it seemed. I held back, forming
half-truths for every potential question
Christie might pose—asking myself,
"Will I tell her about that or not? Will I
act as if everything's fine or will I level
with her?"—while she grew expansive
with me, as she now could. The family
crest was not a joke; it was not a sham. In
some little town in the former East Ger-
many, the Bruewalds were evidently a
big deal. "All the money was tied up in
this castle in Saxony—this huge, horri-
ble, dark, awful house—and, the minute
Onkel Guenther died, Thomas and I
looked at each other and we were like,
'We're selling!' It was like, before he died
we couldn't mention it, and the minute
we got the news we never looked back. It
was a done deal." They had sold the
Schloss, auctioned the furniture, and in-
herited the lot, except, of course, for
what was in trust for Hildie and Axel. (It
had occurred to me that although Hildie
still resembled her father, her appear-
ance would be seen, later in life, as dis-
tinguishing; people would seek owner-
ship of those peculiar looks, the way they
would those of a rock star's eccentric-
looking daughter. Only outsiders would
make the obvious comments; insiders
would know better.) In addition to the
apartment on Fifth Avenue, the Brue-
walds now owned a ski lodge in the Arl-
berg, a country house in New Jersey, and
a mansion in Solln, which Christie de-
scribed as "the Greenwich of Munich."

The sheer weight of the information
had made me dizzy, but when she men-
tioned Greenwich I sat up and did her
the one courtesy I could. I fed her the
line. "That must be nice," I said. "It must
feel like home." She drained her glass of
wine, though she had already drained it
once, and then she put it down and un-
expectedly met my eye. She said, "You
know, when we got the money I went
out and got myself a two-hundred-
and-fifty-dollar-an-hour shrink. I used
to think I was a horrible person." She



wasn't a horrible person, the shrink had told her; in fact, there was nothing wrong with her at all.

We split a third glass of wine and then a fourth, making the waiter laugh. During the fourth, I told her why I had been loitering outside her building—not hoping to get something out of it, just wanting to ante up with something real of my own. Christie laughed, the way you laugh at something you don't quite believe, and at first I interpreted her incredulity as an attack—that's how defensive I felt. "Oh, for Christ's sake!" she said. "You've got to be kidding!" I stared stonily at the table, the way I do when I'm both drunk and mortally offended. "No, no—listen. Thomas is on the board, and they owe him a big favor. This is no problem, no problem at all. Don't believe what they say about the liquid assets. It's just a way of keeping people out. Anyway," she said, "I'll tell them about your Mayflower ancestor."

"I told you about our Mayflower ancestor?" I said.

"Of course you did!" She smiled. "The first time we met."

There was nothing I could do but turn red and finish the wine. Christie went to the bathroom, and I sat there flipping a matchbook over and over in my hand. I had an anticipatory feeling, as if I were waiting for a date to return, as if we might be planning to go back to her deluxe pad and make out on her and Thomas's king-size bed. People had always said that Christie had a great body, and that's the kind of body it was—firm, relentlessly fit, and offered up as a commodity for others to comment on. In the early nineties, she had been an aerobics queen, logging two, three hours a day at the gym; now, of course, she was into yoga and Pilates, but, "to tell you the truth," she'd confessed earlier in the afternoon, "I kind of miss the screaming and the jumping up and down."

We had moved to the city at the same time—ten years ago now—and sitting there, playing with the matchbook, I tried to get a handle on what those ten years had amounted to. We had been single. Now we were *married* women with *children*. But, despite the italics in my head, I couldn't seem to take it any further than that. My thoughts drifted to the apartment, trying again, I

suppose, to notch the progress we had each made. If my husband and I got the place, we'd be cash-poor for a few years. With both of us working, we could bring in x amount per year, put y aside, and contribute z to our 401(k)s. But, even considering promotions and raises, there was a limit to x . X was fixed, and there was only t —time—to increase it. But time ate up your life. You could say, "In ten years," "In twenty years." But the problem was that then whatever it was would be *in* ten years, or *in* twenty years. A decade, two decades of your life would have gone by before you attained it. The fixity of x was the most bittersweet thing I had thought of in ages. Of course, it was comparing myself with Christie that had brought on all these thoughts. When she came out of the ladies' room, looking as happy and drunk as I had felt a minute before, her innocence struck me like a storm. And I realized that what separated us, and perhaps had always separated us, was the understanding that I had only just reached: in life you can only get so far.

I walked home with the good news for my husband and daughter. It seemed that Christie and I were going to be friends again, or friends after all, I should say. My husband would be dubious, to say the least. "The same Christie Thorn you told me you would never have coffee with again?" Nor would he like the idea of her getting us past the board; it would take a week to make him understand what had changed in the course of an afternoon and why it wasn't the case that we were simply using her. Then again, I deserved a dose of his skepticism. I had carried on about her—had laughed in my best moments, but from time to time had been derisive, too, and even indignant. I asked myself, now, how I truly felt about all her pretensions. I went through them one by one—the wedding, the Christmas card, then little things, little remarks from her single days, her obsession with the "it" handbag every year, for instance. I came to the conclusion that none of it was worth getting worked up about. None of it was profound. As the shrink had evidently made clear, none of it had anything to do with Christie herself. On the contrary, I told myself, it was *your* problem. ♦

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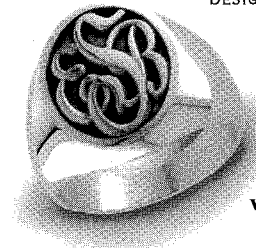
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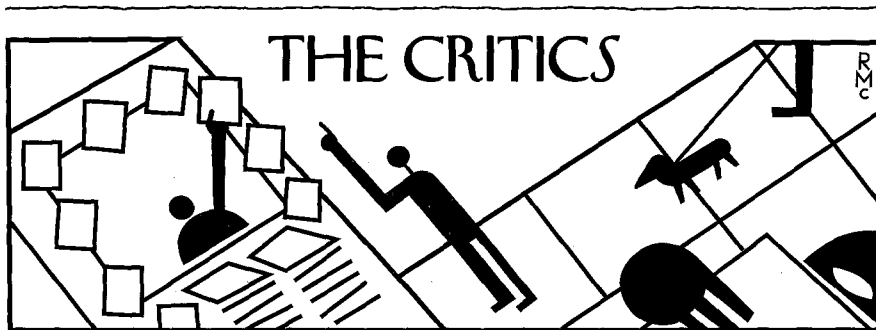
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THE SKY LINE

EYES ON THE PRIZE

The amazing design competition for the World Trade Center site.

BY PAUL GOLDBERGER

The world of architecture has rarely been as lively as it was recently, during the competition for the commission to design a master plan for the World Trade Center site. It was a story about art and culture that had popular appeal, and both the tabloids and the *Times* ran regular updates on their front pages, including the announcement last week by the Governor and the Mayor that Studio Daniel Libeskind had won. At the beginning of February, a poll on the Web site of New York 1, the local news channel, had shown that twenty-one per cent of the citizenry preferred Libeskind's design, fourteen per cent liked that of the other finalist—a team known as THINK, headed by Rafael Viñoly, with Frederic Schwartz of New York, Shigeru Ban of Tokyo, and the New York landscape architect Ken Smith—and sixty-four per cent didn't want either one of them. This didn't prove much, of course. If you'd asked the French to vote on Haussmann's boulevards, they probably would have said no to them, too. I suspect that, for all the talk about moving quickly to decide the future of Ground Zero, many of the people who wrote letters to the editor or participated in the seemingly endless round of online forums and polls about the World Trade Center site didn't actually want a final resolution. The closer a design got to becoming real, the less desirable it appeared to be. For one thing, it destroyed the fantasy that the twin towers would be put back the way they were. Reconstructing the original towers makes absolutely no sense, but it has a curious allure for

many people, as if spending several billion dollars to duplicate one of the more conspicuous architectural mistakes of the twentieth century would be the way to show Al Qaeda that we are in command of contemporary civilization.

One of the most popular among the nine plans submitted for Ground Zero in December was a scheme by the British architect Norman Foster for a pair of seventeen-hundred-foot towers based on triangular forms. They united the jingoists and the avant-garde. You could like them if you felt that rebuilding the twin towers was the right thing to do, and you could like them if you believed that the site deserved a serious piece of contemporary architecture. Foster, who is one of the leading architects of skyscrapers in the world—he designed the Commerzbank in Frankfurt, the tallest tower in Europe, and the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank headquarters in Hong Kong—was widely thought at one point to have the inside track on Ground Zero, and his failure to make the final round of the competition came as something of a surprise. But Foster had largely ignored the instructions of the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, which was in charge of the building process. The corporation wanted to be able to build gradually, in the course of a few years, and to have a plan that could be easily integrated into the rest of lower Manhattan, preferably through the restoration of at least a few of the streets that were removed in the nineteen-sixties to create the original Trade Center. Foster's towers were

set on a superblock not unlike the site of the original twin towers, and they would have immediately flooded the market with office space.

The heart of both the Libeskind and the THINK plans was a powerful abstract symbol that would contain only public space and public functions. They left plenty of room for office buildings, retail stores, and other kinds of commercial development around the edges, and in this sense they were more alike than they at first appeared to be. And both proposals were ambitious, so the L.M.D.C. didn't have to make a choice between experimental architecture and conventional city planning. It could have it both ways.

The L.M.D.C. was widely praised for putting architectural values ahead of politics, but in fact the competition for the job of designing the World Trade Center site was also a useful political tool. It focussed attention on the L.M.D.C. rather than on the Port Authority, which owns Ground Zero and which had only modestly reduced its initial demand that most of the redevelopment consist of profit-making real estate. Once the public was caught up in the L.M.D.C.'s architecture crusade, the Port Authority pretty much had to follow along. Although the L.M.D.C. insisted for quite a while that it was not running an architectural competition that would culminate in a single winner—that it had commissioned all the plans simply as a way of searching for fresh ideas—it behaved as if running an architectural competition were exactly what it was doing, with the public as the impassioned jury.

In December and January, while thousands of people were filing through the Winter Garden to view models of the nine plans, the L.M.D.C. was evaluating each proposal. Roland Betts, the L.M.D.C. board member who had conceived the idea of the competition, realized that the only way to convince the Port Authority to accept the fairly radical plans was to prove that they were practical. Alexander Garvin, the L.M.D.C.'s director of planning, and Stanton Eckstut, the Port Authority's urban-design consultant, were asked to rate them according to several criteria, such as how well they handled traffic. Engineers, traffic experts, and financial consultants ranked them in twelve categories on a five-point scale. Those that were "ideal"

GERALD SCARFF

Garri Szeife



To win the commission as the architect for Ground Zero, Daniel Libeskind revised his plan for a sunken memorial area.

got two green dots. A single green dot meant "excellent"; a yellow dot "acceptable." One red dot was a sign of concern, and a pair of red dots indicated failure. The Libeskind and Viñoly plans received the most green dots.

Once the two finalists were chosen, the process became less genteel. Both architects began a public-relations offensive. Libeskind at one point had two publicists, and in mid-February someone in his office sent out e-mails to a list of people that included several journalists, urging them to write to the *Times* to complain about an unexpected slam from Herbert Muschamp, the paper's architecture critic. Two months earlier, Muschamp had written that Libeskind's plan was "marvelous," but now he described it as "an astonishingly tasteless idea." Viñoly's plan, on the other hand, was "a soaring affirmation of American values." Around the same time, the *Post* called the Libeskind proposal a "grotesque, anti-urban, anti-commercial eyesore." (The perpetrator of the pro-Libeskind e-mails sent out an abject retraction, saying that they had not been authorized by the architect.)

Things got more heated. The day the final decision was to be made, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that questions had been raised about the early work of Viñoly, a native of Uruguay who began his career in Argentina. In 1978, he designed sports facilities for the World Cup matches in Buenos Aires, which were sponsored by Argentina's brutal military junta. Viñoly emigrated to the United States the following year, in part, he has said, because he could not stay in a "state of denial" about the repressive generals. The criticism seemed to some to be not unlike attempts to discredit German architects who worked briefly for the Nazis in the nineteen-thirties before fleeing Germany.

Libeskind, on the other hand, seemed to be wrapped in the American flag. He was born in Poland (his parents were survivors of the Holocaust), and he spoke often of his arrival in the United States as a boy of thirteen, in 1960, and of sailing into New York Harbor and seeing the Statue of Liberty. His Ground Zero design, he said, "speaks to the heart and soul of this great city, this great nation, and the world." Although Libeskind has spent most of his career as an academic,

THE TRUTH

You can hide it like a signature
or birthmark but it's always there
in the greasy light of your dreams,
the knots your body makes at night,
the sad innuendos of your eyes,
whispering insidious asides in every
room you cannot remain inside. It's
there in the unquiet ideas that drag and
plead one lonely argument at a time,
and those who own a little are contrite
and fearful of those who own too much,
but owning none takes up your life.
It cannot be replaced with a house or car,
a husband or wife, but can be ignored,
denied, and betrayed, until the last day,
when you pass yourself on the street
and recognize the agreeable life you
were afraid to lead, and turn away.

—Philip Schultz

he was now positioned as a populist figure. This may be why, despite his background as an avant-garde architect, he didn't get as much support among the city's artistic and intellectual community as Viñoly did, even though Viñoly, paradoxically, has always been much more a corporate architect.

Libeskind has a tendency to use sentimental metaphors. For instance, the front of his Felix Nussbaum museum in Osnabrück, Germany, which is dedicated to the work of an artist killed in the Holocaust, consists of a bare concrete wall. Libeskind explains this as representing "absence itself—an empty canvas of Nussbaum's martyred life." He says that the Imperial War Museum in Manchester, England, his largest completed building so far, is based on shards of a globe shattered by war and conflict. Yet Libeskind, who is also designing an addition to the Denver Art Museum, is an architect of great sophistication, and if his rhetoric can be cloying, his work is anything but kitsch.

Libeskind's main office has been in Berlin since 1989, when he won a competition for the Jewish Museum there and decided that he had to be in the city full time or his building would never get built. Even before he won the Ground Zero commission, however, he was mak-

ing plans to move the office to New York—the logical step in its transformation from an academic architectural atelier to a big-time operation.

Viñoly runs a huge firm in lower Manhattan—his model shop alone employs more than twenty people—and most of his clients are well-established institutions, such as the Cleveland Museum of Art, the Philadelphia Orchestra, and the Kennedy Center in Washington, where he has been hired to expand the widely disliked Edward Durell Stone building. Viñoly's partners in THINK are an unlikely group, and they had never worked together before. Frederic Schwartz, a New York architect who was for many years associated with Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, designed the new ferry terminal in lower Manhattan and has deep roots in the downtown community. Shigeru Ban is probably the most theoretically minded of the three, and the one with the strongest credentials in the avant-garde; he often deals with projects that develop new forms of light, modern structures.

The plan that was chosen is significantly different from the one that people saw in the model at the Winter Garden. The L.M.D.C. asked both the Viñoly and the Libeskind teams to revise

their proposals in response to specific criticisms. "This is not a situation where the designers were told to do whatever they wanted," Alexander Garvin explained, although the L.M.D.C. promised to protect the architectural integrity of the plans. "Rest assured that the goal is not to compromise the plans but to make them better," Roland Betts said. Preserving architectural integrity is not usually a priority for government agencies in New York, but both plans really did improve when they were revised.

The Viñoly team had proposed a pair of latticework towers, more than sixteen hundred feet high, around the footprints of the original twin towers. They would have contained cultural facilities, such as museums, in some cases at levels as high as the original Trade Center towers. The notion of small, irregularly shaped buildings as sculptural elements inside a larger framework isn't entirely new—in the nineteen-sixties, the Japanese architectural group known as the Metabolists played around with ideas like this and so did Archigram, the radical architects who worked in London. But as this design evolved it seemed to depend less on those precedents, and to be more original. One of the structures that had been set into the latticework, a swooping shape near the top that went through both towers, bore a grotesque—one assumes inadvertent—resemblance to an airplane smashing into the structure. By the time the revised plan was submitted to the L.M.D.C., the cultural facilities had been pushed toward the bottom, the airplane was gone, and the structures were smaller, lighter, thinner, and shorter. The whole thing had become more elegant than the initial scheme—more a true latticework. It evoked the image of the twin towers, but subtly, and while I suspect that the allusion to the original World Trade Center is what made this design appealing to people whose primary interest was in memorializing the events of September 11th, it was a powerful image in itself, with an extraordinary transparency that made it appear to be a tower of light.

In addition to redesigning their twin towers, THINK added more streets and more retail space. They figured out what the height and bulk of surrounding office buildings should be, but deliberately left the architecture to others. The purpose of their plan was to elevate the pub-

lic realm over the private. Libeskind, too, made much of the public realm in his design, and, like Viñoly, he allowed a certain amount of flexibility for commercial development around the edges. But Libeskind specified particular shapes for his office buildings: crystalline forms, with slicing angles. They would not be background buildings but, rather, would form the essence of the image of his project on the skyline. Libeskind's plan also includes a spire, a broadcast and observation tower that would be the tallest structure in the world. It would repair Manhattan's broken skyline, and although the elaborate hanging gardens Libeskind wanted to have in the upper reaches of the tower may not have made sense, the idea of a crisply sculpted, slender structure that would function both as an antenna and as a symbol is exactly right. The tower is both high-tech and poetic.

The part of Libeskind's plan that attracted the most attention was the exposed slurry wall of concrete that formed the foundation of the original twin towers—the "bathtub." Using it as the basis for a memorial was a powerful and moving idea, not only because of Libeskind's observation that the wall held together during the traumatic destruction of the September 11th attacks and is therefore an apt metaphor for American democracy. There is something fitting about going into the earth to memorialize the victims of the attacks, and leaving a portion of the Ground Zero site permanently excavated, a wound deliberately left open. Libeskind's design avoided the problem that compromises the recent redevelopment of Potsdamer Platz, in Berlin, which, like Ground Zero, was a huge void in the heart of a great city, and which now is an amalgam of new office buildings and retail atriums whose unrelenting sleekness obliterates any trace of the area's painful history. Some of the other aspects of Libeskind's plan seem a bit forced, like the "wedge of light" that is intended to fall near the site of the original towers at 8:46 A.M. every September 11th, and the Park of Heroes, with markings in the pavement that would contain the names of various fire and rescue companies that responded to the attacks, each name set on a direct axis between the center of Ground Zero and the rescue company's home. But the goal is to meld

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sacred space with a functioning city, and Libeskind has a natural instinct for that.

Libeskind plans to make his tall tower precisely 1,776 feet high, which seems like a play for patriotic support. (Or is it a brilliant strategic move, to prevent the Port Authority from cutting it down on practical grounds?) The tower is to be attached to a seventy-story office building, which makes it cheaper to construct than if it were freestanding. But it also becomes dependent on some developer's readiness to pay for an enormous office building, and there is no market for that in lower Manhattan today. In any event, Viñoly's towers could not have been built immediately, either, since they were to have gone directly on top of the footprints of the twin towers, and the PATH facilities below the footprints would have had to be built first.

Libeskind also made significant improvements in the street pattern in his plan: Fulton and Greenwich Streets would be made more prominent, and Cortlandt Street would continue as a covered shopping galleria. He expanded the train station, a huge glass shed, and reoriented it toward the corner of Fulton and Greenwich, which becomes a major intersection. But the most significant change was in the slurry wall. It turned out that while the concrete wall did indeed hold firm on September 11th, it was unlikely to have held indefinitely. Ground Zero is landfill, and the wall was constructed in the nineteen-sixties to keep water out of the Trade Center basements. Horizontal bracing on the Trade Center's subterranean floors counteracted the force of the water of the Hudson River on the other side of the wall. A completely exposed slurry wall would eventually have cracked, engineers said. In any case, the Port Authority wanted to use space underneath the footprints for practical things, like parking for tour buses. Roland Betts suggested that the floor of the bathtub area be raised, and Libeskind agreed. In his winning plan, he used only the top thirty feet of the foundation for the section into which people would descend to view the exposed wall; a new floor would be constructed that would help support the wall and would act as a ceiling for the space below, which would be used mainly for garages and service areas. Only a three-hundred-foot-long section of the

wall would still be exposed all the way down to bedrock, and visitors could descend to the bottom of it.

Although Betts's idea for a revised slurry wall was critical in keeping the Libeskind design in the competition, Betts himself had come to lean toward the Viñoly scheme. "I think people will come to New York clutching pictures of these towers and saying 'Take me to this,'" he said. "It is a postcard image." Most of the L.M.D.C. site-planning committee, including John Whitehead, the chairman of the corporation, also began to favor Viñoly, and rumors spread that he was certain to be chosen. At a meeting on February 25th, the site committee voted in favor of Viñoly, but the next day, after both Libeskind and Viñoly had presented their proposals to Governor Pataki and Mayor Bloomberg, the decision was reversed. It was clear that Pataki, in particular, wanted Libeskind—and that his view meant more than anything else.

One wonders how much the architectural competition will matter in the long run. The Port Authority is continuing to develop its own plans, even as it has been cooperating with the L.M.D.C. in the design process. Larry Silverstein, the developer who leased the towers from the Port Authority just weeks before September 11th and who has continued to insist that he has the legal right to rebuild as he sees fit, said that he likes the Libeskind plan, but he craftily limited his praise to the "site plan," and said nothing about the architect's plans for buildings. Silverstein is still in litigation with his insurers, and when that is settled he will likely get more involved in over-all planning issues. It is possible—although unlikely, given the public's passion about the site—that Libeskind's plan for a sunken memorial in the exposed bathtub will be built and that much of the rest of his design will be abandoned. (Libeskind's plan is easier to eviscerate than the THINK group's would have been.)

The architectural bar has been raised in New York. Ten months ago, it was hard to imagine that the official plan for Ground Zero would be produced by one of the most innovative architects in the world. But what finally gets built will be to a large extent decided in a byzantine political process, accompanied by spin control. ♦

CONNECTING THE DOTS

The paradoxes of intelligence reform.

BY MALCOLM GLADWELL

In the fall of 1973, the Syrian Army began to gather a large number of tanks, artillery batteries, and infantry along its border with Israel. Simultaneously, to the south, the Egyptian Army cancelled all leaves, called up thousands of reservists, and launched a massive military exercise, building roads and preparing anti-aircraft and artillery positions

country's most trusted intelligence sources. Egypt and Syria, the source said, would attack later that day. Top Israeli officials immediately called a meeting. Was war imminent? The head of AMAN, Major General Eli Zeira, looked over the evidence and said he didn't think so. He was wrong. That afternoon, Syria attacked from the east, overwhelming the thin



Biased by "creeping determinism," we're led to think that every surprise was foreseeable.

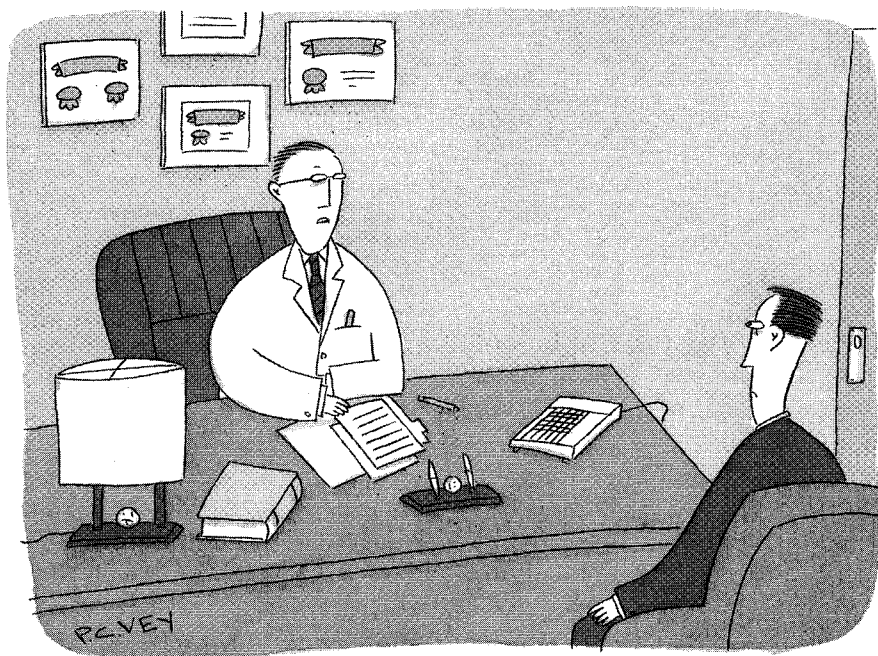
along the Suez Canal. On October 4th, an Israeli aerial reconnaissance mission showed that the Egyptians had moved artillery into offensive positions. That evening, AMAN, the Israeli military intelligence agency, learned that portions of the Soviet fleet near Port Said and Alexandria had set sail, and that the Soviet government had begun airlifting the families of Soviet advisers out of Cairo and Damascus. Then, at four o'clock in the morning on October 6th, Israel's director of military intelligence received an urgent telephone call from one of the

Israeli defenses in the Golan Heights, and Egypt attacked from the south, bombing Israeli positions and sending eight thousand infantry streaming across the Suez. Despite all the warnings of the previous weeks, Israeli officials were caught by surprise. Why couldn't they connect the dots?

If you start on the afternoon of October 6th and work backward, the trail of clues pointing to an attack seems obvious; you'd have to conclude that something was badly wrong with the Israeli intelligence service. On the other hand, if

you start several years before the Yom Kippur War and work forward, re-creating what people in Israeli intelligence knew in the same order that they knew it, a very different picture emerges. In the fall of 1973, Egypt and Syria certainly looked as if they were preparing to go to war. But, in the Middle East of the time, countries always looked as if they were going to war. In the fall of 1971, for instance, both Egypt's President and its minister of war stated publicly that the hour of battle was approaching. The Egyptian Army was mobilized. Tanks and bridging equipment were sent to the canal. Offensive positions were readied. And nothing happened. In December of 1972, the Egyptians mobilized again. The Army furiously built fortifications along the canal. A reliable source told Israeli intelligence that an attack was imminent. Nothing happened. In the spring of 1973, the President of Egypt told *Newsweek* that everything in his country "is now being mobilized in earnest for the resumption of battle." Egyptian forces were moved closer to the canal. Extensive fortifications were built along the Suez. Blood donors were rounded up. Civil-defense personnel were mobilized. Blackouts were imposed throughout Egypt. A trusted source told Israeli intelligence that an attack was imminent. It didn't come. Between January and October of 1973, the Egyptian Army mobilized *nineteen times* without going to war. The Israeli government couldn't mobilize its Army every time its neighbors threatened war. Israel is a small country with a citizen Army. Mobilization was disruptive and expensive, and the Israeli government was acutely aware that if its Army was mobilized and Egypt and Syria weren't serious about war, the very act of mobilization might cause them to become serious about war.

Nor did the other signs seem remarkable. The fact that the Soviet families had been sent home could have signified nothing more than a falling-out between the Arab states and Moscow. Yes, a trusted source called at four in the morning, with definite word of a late-afternoon attack, but his last two attack warnings had been wrong. What's more, the source said that the attack would come at sunset, and an attack so late in the day wouldn't leave enough time



"Well, how long do you want to live?"

for opening air strikes. Israeli intelligence didn't see the pattern of Arab intentions, in other words, because, until Egypt and Syria actually attacked, on the afternoon of October 6, 1973, their intentions didn't form a pattern. They formed a Rorschach blot. What is clear in hindsight is rarely clear before the fact. It's an obvious point, but one that nonetheless bears repeating, particularly when we're in the midst of assigning blame for the surprise attack of September 11th.

Of the many postmortems conducted after September 11th, the one that has received the most attention is "The Cell: Inside the 9/11 Plot, and Why the F.B.I. and C.I.A. Failed to Stop It" (Hyperion; \$24.95), by John Miller, Michael Stone, and Chris Mitchell. The authors begin their tale with El Sayyid Nosair, the Egyptian who was arrested in November of 1990 for shooting Rabbi Meir Kahane, the founder of the Jewish Defense League, in the ballroom of the Marriott Hotel in midtown Manhattan. Nosair's apartment in New Jersey was searched, and investigators found sixteen boxes of files, including training manuals from the Army Special Warfare School; copies of teletypes that had been routed to the Joint

Chiefs of Staff; bombmaking manuals; and maps, annotated in Arabic, of landmarks like the Statue of Liberty, Rockefeller Center, and the World Trade Center. According to "The Cell," Nosair was connected to gunrunners and to Islamic radicals in Brooklyn, who were in turn behind the World Trade Center bombing two and a half years later, which was masterminded by Ramzi Yousef, who then showed up in Manila in 1994, apparently plotting to kill the Pope, crash a plane into the Pentagon or the C.I.A., and bomb as many as twelve transcontinental airliners simultaneously. And who was Yousef associating with in the Philippines? Mohammed Khalifa, Wali Khan Amin-Shah, and Ibrahim Munir, all of whom had fought alongside, pledged a loyalty oath to, or worked for a shadowy Saudi Arabian millionaire named Osama bin Laden.

Miller was a network-television correspondent throughout much of the past decade, and the best parts of "The Cell" recount his own experiences in covering the terrorist story. He is an extraordinary reporter. At the time of the first World Trade Center attack, in February of 1993, he clapped a flashing light on the dashboard of his car and followed the wave of emergency vehicles downtown.

(At the bombing site, he was continuously trailed by a knot of reporters—I was one of them—who had concluded that the best way to learn what was going on was to try to overhear his conversations.) Miller became friends with the F.B.I. agents who headed the New York counterterrorist office—Neil Herman and John O'Neill, in particular—and he became as obsessed with Al Qaeda as they were. He was in Yemen, with the F.B.I., after Al Qaeda bombed the U.S.S. Cole. In 1998, at the Marriott in Islamabad, he and his cameraman met someone known to them only as Akhtar, who spirited them across the border into the hills of Afghanistan to interview Osama bin Laden. In "The Cell," the period from 1990 through September 11th becomes a seamless, devastating narrative: the evolution of Al Qaeda. "How did this happen to us?" the book asks in its opening pages. The answer, the authors argue, can be found by following the "thread" connecting Kahane's murder to September 11th. In the events of the past decade, they declare, there is a clear "recurring pattern."

The same argument is made by Senator Richard Shelby, vice-chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, in his investigative report on September 11th, released this past December. The report is a lucid and powerful document, in which Shelby painstakingly points out all the missed or misinterpreted signals pointing to a major terrorist attack. The C.I.A. knew that two suspected Al Qaeda operatives, Khalid al-Mihdhar and Nawaf al-Hazmi, had entered the country, but the C.I.A. didn't tell the F.B.I. or the N.S.C. An F.B.I. agent in Phoenix sent a memo to headquarters that began with the sentence "The purpose of this communication is to advise the bureau and New York of the possibility of a coordinated effort by Osama Bin Laden to send students to the United States to attend civilian aviation universities and colleges." But the F.B.I. never acted on the information, and failed to connect it with reports that terrorists were interested in using airplanes as weapons. The F.B.I. took into custody the suspected terrorist Zacarias Moussaoui, on account of his suspicious behavior at flight school, but was unable to integrate his case into a larger picture of terrorist behavior. "The most funda-

mental problem . . . is our Intelligence Community's inability to 'connect the dots' available to it before September 11, 2001, about terrorists' interest in attacking symbolic American targets," the Shelby report states. The phrase "connect the dots" appears so often in the report that it becomes a kind of mantra. There was a pattern, as plain as day in retrospect, yet the vaunted American intelligence community simply could not see it.

None of these postmortems, however, answer the question raised by the Yom Kippur War: Was this pattern obvious *before* the attack? This question—whether we revise our judgment of events after the fact—is something that psychologists have paid a great deal of attention to. For example, on the eve of Richard Nixon's historic visit to China, the psychologist Baruch Fischhoff asked a group of people to estimate the probability of a series of possible outcomes of the trip. What were the chances that the trip would lead to permanent diplomatic relations between China and the United States? That Nixon would meet with the leader of China, Mao Tse-tung, at least once? That Nixon would call the trip a success? As it turned out, the trip was a diplomatic triumph, and Fischhoff then went back to the same people and asked them to recall what their estimates of the different outcomes of the visit had been. He found that the subjects now, overwhelmingly, "remembered" being more optimistic than they had actually been. If you originally thought that it was unlikely that Nixon would meet with Mao, afterward, when the press was full of accounts of Nixon's meeting with Mao, you'd "remember" that you had thought the chances of a meeting were pretty good. Fischhoff calls this phenomenon "creeping determinism"—the sense that grows on us, in retrospect, that what has happened was actually inevitable—and the chief effect of creeping determinism, he points out, is that it turns unexpected events into expected events. As he writes, "The occurrence of an event increases its reconstructed probability and makes it less surprising than it would have been had the original probability been remembered."

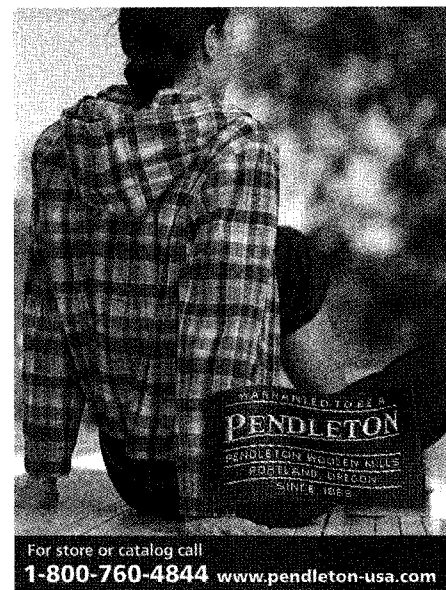
To read the Shelby report, or the seamless narrative from Nosair to bin

Laden in "The Cell," is to be convinced that if the C.I.A. and the F.B.I. had simply been able to connect the dots what happened on September 11th should not have been a surprise at all. Is this a fair criticism or is it just a case of creeping determinism?

On August 7, 1998, two Al Qaeda terrorists detonated a cargo truck filled with explosives outside the United States Embassy in Nairobi, killing two hundred and thirteen people and injuring more than four thousand. Miller, Stone, and Mitchell see the Kenyan Embassy bombing as a textbook example of intelligence failure. The C.I.A., they tell us, had identified an Al Qaeda cell in Kenya well before the attack, and its members were under surveillance. They had an eight-page letter, written by an Al Qaeda operative, speaking of the imminent arrival of "engineers"—the code word for bombmakers—in Nairobi. The United States Ambassador to Kenya, Prudence Bushnell, had begged Washington for more security. A prominent Kenyan lawyer and legislator says that the Kenyan intelligence service warned U.S. intelligence about the plot several months before August 7th, and in November of 1997 a man named Mustafa Mahmoud Said Ahmed, who worked for one of Osama bin Laden's companies, walked into the United States Embassy in Nairobi and told American intelligence of a plot to blow up the building. What did our officials do? They forced the leader of the Kenyan cell—a U.S. citizen—to return home, and then abruptly halted their surveillance of the group. They ignored the eight-page letter. They allegedly showed the Kenyan intelligence service's warning to the Mossad, which dismissed it, and after questioning Ahmed they decided that he wasn't credible. After the bombing, "The Cell" tells us, a senior State Department official phoned Bushnell and asked, "How could this have happened?"

"For the first time since the blast," Miller, Stone, and Mitchell write, "Bushnell's horror turned to anger. There was too much history. 'I wrote you a letter,' she said."

This is all very damning, but doesn't it fall into the creeping-determinism trap? It is not at all clear that it passes



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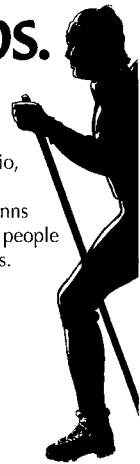
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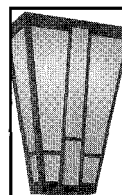


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the creeping-determinism test. It's an edited version of the past. What we don't hear about is all the other people whom American intelligence had under surveillance, how many other warnings they received, and how many other tips came in that seemed promising at the time but led nowhere. The central challenge of intelligence gathering has always been the problem of "noise": the fact that useless information is vastly more plentiful than useful information. Shelby's report mentions that the F.B.I.'s counterterrorism division has *sixty-eight thousand* outstanding and unassigned leads dating back to 1995. And, of those, probably no more than a few hundred are useful. Analysts, in short, must be selective, and the decisions made in Kenya, by that standard, do not seem unreasonable. Surveillance on the cell was shut down, but, then, its leader had left the country. Bushnell warned Washington—but, as "The Cell" admits, there were bomb warnings in Africa all the time. Officials at the Mossad thought the Kenyan intelligence was dubious, and the Mossad ought to know. Ahmed may have worked for bin Laden but he failed a polygraph test, and it was also learned that he had previously given similar—groundless—warnings to other embassies in Africa. When a man comes into your office, fails a lie-detector test, and is found to have shopped the same unsubstantiated story all over town, can you be blamed for turning him out?

Miller, Stone, and Mitchell make the same mistake when they quote from a transcript of a conversation that was recorded by Italian intelligence in August of 2001 between two Al Qaeda operatives, Abdel Kader Es Sayed and a man known as al Hilal. This, they say, is yet another piece of intelligence that "seemed to forecast the September 11 attacks."

"I've been studying airplanes," al Hilal tells Es Sayed. "If God wills, I hope to be able to bring you a window or a piece of a plane the next time I see you."

"What, is there a jihad planned?" Es Sayed asks.

"In the future, listen to the news and remember these words: 'Up above,'" al Hilal replies.

Es Sayed thinks that al Hilal is referring to an operation in his native Yemen, but al Hilal corrects him: "But the surprise attack will come from the other country, one of those attacks you will never forget."

A moment later al Hilal says about the plan, "It is something terrifying that goes from south to north, east to west. The person who devised this plan is a madman, but a genius. He will leave them frozen [in shock]."

This is a tantalizing exchange. It would now seem that it refers to September 11th. But in what sense was it a "forecast"? It gave neither time nor place nor method nor target. It suggested only that there were terrorists out there who liked to talk about doing something dramatic with an airplane—which did not, it must be remembered, reliably distinguish them from any other terrorists of the past thirty years.

In the real world, intelligence is invariably ambiguous. Information about enemy intentions tends to be short on detail. And information that's rich in detail tends to be short on intentions. In April of 1941, for instance, the Allies learned that Germany had moved a huge army up to the Russian front. The intelligence was beyond dispute: the troops could be seen and counted. But what did it mean? Churchill concluded that Hitler wanted to attack Russia. Stalin concluded that Hitler was serious about attacking, but only if the Soviet Union didn't meet the terms of the German ultimatum. The British foreign secretary, Anthony Eden, thought that Hitler was bluffing, in the hope of winning further Russian concessions. British intelligence thought—at least, in the beginning—that Hitler simply wanted to reinforce his eastern frontier against a possible Soviet attack. The only way for this piece of intelligence to have been definitive would have been if the Allies had a second piece of intelligence—like the phone call between al Hilal and Es Sayed—that demonstrated Germany's true purpose. Similarly, the only way the al Hilal phone call would have been definitive is if we'd also had intelligence as detailed as the Allied knowledge of German troop movements. But rarely



do intelligence services have the luxury of both kinds of information. Nor are their analysts mind readers. It is only with hindsight that human beings acquire that skill.

"The Cell" tells us that, in the final months before September 11th, Washington was frantic with worry:

A spike in phone traffic among suspected al Qaeda members in the early part of the summer [of 2001], as well as debriefings of [an al Qaeda operative in custody] who had begun cooperating with the government, convinced investigators that bin Laden was planning a significant operation—one intercepted al Qaeda message spoke of a "Hiroshima-type" event—and that he was planning it soon. Through the summer, the CIA repeatedly warned the White House that attacks were imminent.

The fact that these worries did not protect us is not evidence of the limitations of the intelligence community. It is evidence of the limitations of intelligence.

In the early nineteen-seventies, a professor of psychology at Stanford University named David L. Rosenhan gathered together a painter, a graduate student, a pediatrician, a psychiatrist, a housewife, and three psychologists. He told them to check into different psychiatric hospitals under aliases, with the complaint that they had been hearing voices. They were instructed to say that the voices were unfamiliar, and that they heard words like "empty," "thud," and "hollow." Apart from that initial story, the pseudo patients were instructed to answer every question truthfully, to behave as they normally would, and to tell the hospital staff—at every opportunity—that the voices were gone and that they had experienced no further symptoms. The eight subjects were hospitalized, on average, for nineteen days. One was kept for almost two months. Rosenhan wanted to find out if the hospital staffs would ever see through the ruse. They never did.

Rosenhan's test is, in a way, a classic intelligence problem. Here was a signal (a sane person) buried in a mountain of conflicting and confusing noise (a mental hospital), and the intelligence analysts (the doctors) were asked to connect the dots—and they failed spectacularly. In the course of their hospital stay, the eight pseudo patients were given a total of twenty-one hun-

dred pills. They underwent psychiatric interviews, and sober case summaries documenting their pathologies were written up. They were asked by Rosenhan to take notes documenting how they were treated, and this quickly became part of their supposed pathology. "Patient engaging in writing behavior," one nurse ominously wrote in her notes. Having been labelled as ill upon admission, they could not shake the diagnosis. "Nervous?" a friendly nurse asked one of the subjects as he paced the halls one day. "No," he corrected her, to no avail, "bored."

The solution to this problem seems obvious enough. Doctors and nurses need to be made alert to the possibility that sane people sometimes get admitted to mental hospitals. So Rosenhan went to a research-and-teaching hospital and informed the staff that at some point in the next three months he would once again send over one or more of his pseudo patients. This time, of the hundred and ninety-three patients admitted in the three-month period, forty-one were identified by at least one staff member as being almost certainly sane. Once again, however, they were wrong. Rosenhan hadn't sent anyone over. In attempting to solve one kind of intelligence problem (overdiagnosis), the hospital simply created another problem (underdiagnosis). This is the second, and perhaps more serious, consequence of creeping determinism: in our zeal to correct what we believe to be the problems of the past, we end up creating new problems for the future.

Pearl Harbor, for example, was widely considered to be an organizational failure. The United States had all the evidence it needed to predict the Japanese attack, but the signals were scattered throughout the various intelligence services. The Army and the Navy didn't talk to each other. They spent all their time arguing and competing. This was, in part, why the Central Intelligence Agency was created, in 1947—to insure that all intelligence would be collected and processed in one place. Twenty years after Pearl Harbor, the United States suffered another catastrophic intelligence failure, at the Bay of Pigs: the Kennedy Administration grossly un-

derestimated the Cubans' capacity to fight and their support for Fidel Castro. This time, however, the diagnosis was completely different. As Irving L. Janis concluded in his famous study of "groupthink," the root cause of the Bay of Pigs fiasco was that the operation was conceived by a small, highly cohesive group whose close ties inhibited the beneficial effects of argument and competition. Centralization was now the problem. One of the most influential organizational sociologists of the postwar era, Harold Wilensky, went out of his way to praise the "constructive rivalry" fostered by Franklin D. Roosevelt, which, he says, is why the President had such formidable intelligence on how to attack the economic ills of the Great Depression. In his classic 1967 work "Organizational Intelligence," Wilensky pointed out that Roosevelt would

use one anonymous informant's information to challenge and check another's, putting both on their toes; he recruited strong personalities and structured their work so that clashes would be certain. . . . In foreign affairs, he gave Moley and Welles tasks that overlapped those of Secretary of State Hull; in conservation and power, he gave Ickes and Wallace identical missions; in welfare, confusing both functions and initials, he assigned PWA to Ickes, WPA to Hopkins; in politics, Farley found himself competing with other political advisors for control over patronage. The effect: the timely advertisement of arguments, with both the experts and the President pressured to consider the main choices as they came boiling up from below.

The intelligence community that we had prior to September 11th was the direct result of this philosophy. The F.B.I. and the C.I.A. were supposed to be rivals, just as Ickes and Wallace were rivals. But now we've changed our minds. The F.B.I. and the C.I.A., Senator Shelby tells us disapprovingly, argue and compete with one another. The September 11th story, his report concludes, "should be an object lesson in the perils of failing to share information promptly and efficiently between (and within) organizations." Shelby wants recentralization and more focus on cooperation. He wants a "central national level knowledge-compiling entity standing above and independent from the disputatious bureaucracies." He thinks the intelligence service should be run by a small, highly cohesive group, and so

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he suggests that the F.B.I. be removed from the counterterrorism business entirely. The F.B.I., according to Shelby, is governed by

deeply-entrenched individual mindsets that prize the production of evidence-supported narratives of defendant wrongdoing over the drawing of probabilistic inferences based on incomplete and fragmentary information in order to support decision-making. . . . Law enforcement organizations handle information, reach conclusions, and ultimately just *think* differently than intelligence organizations. Intelligence analysts would doubtless make poor policemen, and it has become very clear that policemen make poor intelligence analysts.

In his State of the Union Message, President George W. Bush did what Shelby wanted, and announced the formation of the Terrorist Threat Integration Center—a special unit combining the antiterrorist activities of the F.B.I. and the C.I.A. The cultural and organizational diversity of the intelligence business, once prized, is now despised.

The truth is, though, that it is just as easy, in the wake of September 11th, to make the case for the old system. Isn't it an advantage that the F.B.I. doesn't think like the C.I.A.? It was the F.B.I., after all, that produced two of the most prescient pieces of analysis—the request by the Minneapolis office for a warrant to secretly search Zacarias Mousaoui's belongings, and the now famous Phoenix memo. In both cases, what was valuable about the F.B.I.'s analysis was precisely the way in which it differed from the traditional “big picture,” probabilistic inference-making of the analyst. The F.B.I. agents in the field focussed on a single case, dug deep, and came up with an “evidence-supported narrative of defendant wrongdoing” that spoke volumes about a possible Al Qaeda threat.

The same can be said for the alleged problem of rivalry. “The Cell” describes what happened after police in the Philippines searched the apartment that Ramzi Yousef shared with his co-conspirator, Abdul Hakim Murad. Agents from the F.B.I.'s counterterrorism unit immediately flew to Manila and “bumped up against the C.I.A.” As the old adage about the Bureau and the Agency has it, the F.B.I. wanted to string Murad up and the C.I.A. wanted to string him along. The two groups eventually worked together, but only because they had to. It

was a relationship “marred by rivalry and mistrust.” But what's wrong with this kind of rivalry? As Miller, Stone, and Mitchell tell us, the real objection of Neil Herman—the F.B.I.'s former domestic counterterrorism chief—to “working with the C.I.A. had nothing to do with procedure. He just didn't think the Agency was going to be of any help in finding Ramzi Yousef. ‘Back then, I don't think the C.I.A. could have found a person in a bathroom,’” Herman says. “‘Hell, I don't think they could have found the bathroom.’” The assumption of the reformers is always that the rivalry between the F.B.I. and the C.I.A. is essentially marital, that it is the dysfunction of people who ought to work together but can't. But it could equally be seen as a version of the marketplace rivalry that leads to companies working harder and making better products.

There is no such thing as a perfect intelligence system, and every seeming improvement involves a tradeoff. A couple of months ago, for example, a suspect in custody in Canada, who was wanted in New York on forgery charges, gave police the names and photographs of five Arab immigrants, who he said had crossed the border into the United States. The F.B.I. put out an alert on December 29th, posting the names and photographs on its Web site, in the “war on terrorism” section. Even President Bush joined in, saying, “We need to know why they have been smuggled into the country, what they're doing in the country.” As it turned out, the suspect in Canada had made the story up. Afterward, an F.B.I. official said that the agency circulated the photographs in order to “err on the side of caution.” Our intelligence services today are highly sensitive. But this kind of sensitivity is not without its costs. As the political scientist Richard K. Betts wrote in his essay “Analysis, War, and Decision: Why Intelligence Failures Are Inevitable,” “Making warning systems more sensitive reduces the risk of surprise, but increases the number of false alarms, which in turn reduces sensitivity.” When we run out and buy duct tape to seal our windows against chemical attack, and nothing happens, and when the government's warning light is orange for weeks on end, and nothing happens, we soon begin to doubt every warning that comes

our way. Why was the Pacific fleet at Pearl Harbor so unresponsive to signs of an impending Japanese attack? Because, in the week before December 7, 1941, they had checked out seven reports of Japanese submarines in the area—and all seven were false. Rosenhan's psychiatrists used to miss the sane; then they started to see sane people everywhere. That is a change, but it is not exactly progress.

In the wake of the Yom Kippur War, the Israeli government appointed a special investigative commission, and one of the witnesses called was Major General Zeira, the head of AMAN. Why, they asked, had he insisted that war was not imminent? His answer was simple:

The Chief of Staff has to make decisions, and his decisions must be clear. The best support that the head of AMAN can give the Chief of Staff is to give a clear and unambiguous estimate, provided that it is done in an objective fashion. To be sure, the clearer and sharper the estimate, the clearer and sharper the mistake—but this is a professional hazard for the head of AMAN.

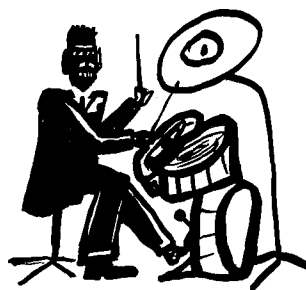
The historians Eliot A. Cohen and John Gooch, in their book “Military Misfortunes,” argue that it was Zeira's certainty that had proved fatal: “The culpable failure of AMAN's leaders in September and October 1973 lay not in their belief that Egypt would not attack but in their supreme confidence, which dazzled decision-makers. . . . Rather than impress upon the prime minister, the chief of staff and the minister of defense the ambiguity of the situation, they insisted—until the last day—that there would be no war, period.”

But, of course, Zeira gave an unambiguous answer to the question of war because that is what politicians and the public demanded of him. No one wants ambiguity. Today, the F.B.I. gives us color-coded warnings and speaks of “increased chatter” among terrorist operatives, and the information is infuriating to us because it is so vague. What does “increased chatter” mean? We want a prediction. We want to believe that the intentions of our enemies are a puzzle that intelligence services can piece together, so that a clear story emerges. But there rarely is a clear story—at least, not until afterward, when some enterprising journalist or investigative committee decides to write one. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

Repetition, by Alain Robbe-Grillet, translated from the French by Richard Howard (Grove; \$23). The grand old man of the *nouveau roman* has published his first novel in two decades, and, faithful to its title, it is not at all new but, rather, a variation on old themes and obsessions. In fact, "Repetition" is a sort of deliberate distortion—or alteration, or rewriting, or retelling—of Robbe-Grillet's earlier books, in particular the first, "The Erasers" (1953). The plot, such as it is, concerns a French secret agent who, in 1949, is sent to Berlin, where he witnesses a murder. This leads him to search out his own past. The reader, meanwhile, is led to distrust every narrator who pops up. Robbe-Grillet's conviction that the true writer has nothing to say, only the way he says it, remains undimmed, but seldom has the *nouveau roman* seemed so *ancien*.

Any Human Heart, by William Boyd (Knopf; \$24.95). Couched as the diary of one Logan Mountstuart—writer, seducer, spy, and all-around charlatan—Boyd's novel attempts a panorama of twentieth-century history with its hero constantly at the edge of the frame. Mountstuart dines with Bloomsburyites, meets Joyce in Paris, spends the Spanish Civil War hobnobbing with Hemingway and the Second World War trailing the Duke of Windsor for British Intelligence. Later, he runs an art gallery in New York, and gets mixed up in the Nigerian civil war and with the Baader-Meinhof gang. Such an antic plot should not succeed, and yet disbelief remains suspended, thanks to Boyd's skill in producing a novel that successfully mimics a diary in all its human pettiness. He allows Mountstuart's voice to age like



port: the precocious schoolboy blithely speculates that the "announcement of a future fact has a tenuous hold on the present moment," while the adult reflects, "It's always hard trying to imagine the loss of something you never had."

What I Loved, by Siri Hustvedt (Henry Holt; \$25). When the narrator of Hustvedt's third novel, an affable art-history professor at Columbia called Leo Hertzberg, buys a picture by Bill Wechsler, a lugubrious, handsome painter, a friendship ensues. It's 1975, admiration leads to intimacy, and the two men and their wives end up living in the same building on Greene Street. The revolver on the wall is a Swiss Army knife that Leo gives his son for his eleventh birthday: when it goes missing, the book turns from novel of art-world manners to psychological thriller. Hustvedt is terrific at evoking the milieu of the haute bourgeoisie—the house in Vermont, the wine-drenched meals, the migraines. But, as a narrator, Leo, now a reminiscent seventy, is full of orotund declarations about life and love that muffle the well-constructed plot.

A Life of Privilege, Mostly, by Gardner Botsford (St. Martin's; \$24.95). The "privilege" in the title of Botsford's gruffly stylish memoir is his upbringing as the son of a Midwestern heiress; "mostly" is his dry way of alluding to the Second World War. He served in the First Infantry Division (which lost more than twenty thousand men) and saw action at Omaha Beach and the Battle of the Bulge. Though he was "damn near killed," he finished the war a heavily decorated captain. Among the many miraculous coincidences of war—a bullet dodged, an old friend randomly encountered—Botsford had the good fortune to meet A. J. Liebling at the front. This came in handy when, after the war, Botsford became an editor—and, eventually, Liebling's editor—at *The New Yorker*: "Although it was an article of faith with him that all editors were incompetent losers, he must have decided to be nice to me as a gesture to the First Division."

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PARLOR MUSIC

Vuillard's theatrical intimacy.

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL

Edouard Vuillard, who is the subject of a huge retrospective of paintings, drawings, prints, decorative projects, and photographs at the National Gallery in Washington, D.C., was one of the great fin-de-siècle neurotics who established self-conscious subjectivity as a standard spiritual appliance of twentieth-century culture. He was also the leading homebody among modern masters, a nervous Parisian mama's boy whose intimate subject matter and love of décor extoll the bourgeois nest. I have often thought that Vuillard is absurdly underrated. The density of emotion, the subtle beauty, and the excruciating sense of the eros of private life in his paintings can make other twentieth-century artists seem like louts. I've looked forward to a retrospective like this one (it runs until April 20th) for some time, hoping that it would bring Vuillard's achievement into focus and make firm judgments possible. No such luck. Greater familiarity with this artist makes one's assessment of him more tentative rather than less. His best pictures exude a hypersensitive, ambiguous aura of grace. When you are under their spell, you may shudder at the gaucherie of ever wanting something more definite. Even then, however, there is something not all there about him.

Vuillard was born in 1868, the son of a former military man and a corset-maker. His father died when he was fifteen, and the dominant figures of his early life were his maternal grandmother, his mother, and his older sister Marie. He called them his "muses." He continued to live with his mother, whom he adored, and to portray her again and again, until her death, in 1928, when he was sixty. His love life, such as it was, centered on two married, high-powered art patrons, Misia Natanson and Lucy Hessel. A thin-faced, bearded man, he was chronically insecure about his looks and his capacities. It was only after four tries that he was admitted to the École

des Beaux-Arts, in 1887. He formed lifelong friendships with the dandyish minor symbolist painter Kerr-Xavier Roussel and with Pierre Bonnard—his twin in art-history books, another "intimist" who housebroke modern aesthetics. Vuillard stands out for the richness of his early, symbolist works, which retained resources of reality-describing naturalism while anticipating the all-out emotionality of Expressionism.

In the eighteen-nineties, Vuillard was active in avant-garde theatre, designing sets, posters, and programs for plays by, among others, Ibsen and Maeterlinck. In 1894, he created a green gauze scrim for the symbolist play "La Gardienne," by Henri de Regnier. The backdrop behind the veil, an appalled critic wrote, "showed a dream landscape, blue trees, purple ground, a mauve palace, a Puvis de Chavannes fresco imitated by a color-blind baby." From 1897 on, Vuillard was a prolific photographer of his friends and family. The exhibition reveals this little-known aspect of his career in a large selection of casual-seeming photographs, aptly titled "The Intentional Snapshot," that evoke Ibsen's unreassuring naturalism with whiffs of spooky Maeterlinck.

Vuillard did his most astonishing work in the early and mid-nineties, in paintings of interiors that often include his mother and Marie. In the famous "Interior, Mother and Sister of the Artist" (1893), Mme. Vuillard sits solidly in a black dress while the painfully thin Marie, who is standing off to the side in a patterned dress against hyperactively patterned wallpaper, bends, as if to squeeze herself into the frame. A distorted bureau in the background looms like an oncoming truck. Only Vuillard's contemporary Edvard Munch could generate such psychological resonance in figure compositions. Related works include "The Conversation" (1891-92), in which Marie grabs a kitchen chair, as if in defense against her mother's massive presence. It is difficult to

tell whether the artist was disturbed or perversely delighted by the strain between the two women, who were both devoted to him. Elevating the almost caricatural "Conversation" are sonorous tones of yellow, ochre, and black. Slow-acting, eloquent color was Vuillard's forte, reinforced by intricate, nubbly paint textures. A sort of dilated gaze, finding as much expressiveness in the details of carefully furnished rooms as in the people who inhabit them, charges every square inch with incipient meaning.

Vuillard would be an excellent subject for a stage play, with a ready-made plot centering on the marriage, in 1893, of Roussel to the spinsterish Marie. In 1892, Vuillard accompanied his cocky friend on a journey away from Paris, to escape the raging machinations of a servant girl whom Roussel had loved and left. The subsequent union with Marie, which evidently made no sense to anyone else in their circle, may have been extorted as recompense. In any event, Vuillard celebrated the couple's courtship and nuptials in such paintings as "Interior with Worktable," also known as "The Suitor" (1893), in which Roussel peeks around a door at his fiancée as she toils in her mother's corset workshop. All such cuteness soon evaporated from a marriage that was beset by the stillbirth of a child and riven by Roussel's wandering ways. The two separated in 1895. A reconciliation was brought about by energetic family diplomacy, which is memorialized in Vuillard's "Large Interior with Six Figures" (1897), a darkly gorgeous, grandly theatrical painting in which Mme. Vuillard coolly confronts Roussel's mistress in the parlor of the girl's family. It is a tableau worthy of a Geneva peace conference. Roussel and Marie settled down, though less than joyously, as Vuillard faithfully documented with a stony lunch-table scene, in 1899 (not in the show). Was Roussel a broken man? Was Vuillard happy about it? A stage director in life as in art, he had brought off a thoroughly creepy coup.

Vuillard's work took a conservative, enervating turn after 1898, when—except in his superb, frankly decorative panels and screens—he gave up surface patterning in favor of old-fashioned illusions of pictorial depth. The different parts of the scenes, locked into spatial



Vuillard's "Interior with a Worktable," also known as "The Suitor" (1893): The artist as stage director.

positions, have trouble interacting laterally: they can't get at each other. Vuillard compensated by unifying paintings with color in closer tones (blacks give way to grays) and by abandoning oil paint for puttylike distemper, a material that he had discovered in his theatre work. Distemper—pigments suspended in water-soluble animal glue—is tricky stuff. Well known for its use by the dour Old Master Andrea Mantegna, it produces a suave, tactile surface but an arid, opaque look. At best, it glows like sunstruck plaster. But it obliterates the shadowy nuances that gave Vuillard's oil paintings their poetry. Pictures done in distemper read not as mysteries but as virtuoso exercises. In the society portraits of his later years (he died in 1940), this effect becomes actively unpleasant. The compulsive renderings of settings, with

their pointless attention to bric-a-brac, cast the sitters as an interior decorator's stilted, finishing touches. In these commissions, he didn't so much portray his self-satisfied patrons as Vuillardize them.

It is interesting to compare the mature Vuillard with Bonnard, who stayed truer to the pictorial flatness that, after the eighteen-nineties, became an irreversible logic of modern painting. Bonnard translated a similar spirit of diffused attentiveness into fields of drenching color. Vibrant hues and insistent, itchy brushwork convey the temperature and humidity of domestic scenes. (Stare long enough at one of his water-logged bathtub pictures and you almost feel the skin of your fingertips pucker.) Vuillard had it in him to be the greater artist. He had a much richer comprehension of the so-

cial and personal pressures of modernity in the daily life of Paris. In large doses, Bonnard's tireless bliss can cloy, but he kept his priorities straight as a painter, always merging his vision with an appropriate, satisfying style. Vuillard didn't. In the vastly too big Washington show, we sense him being distracted repeatedly, and at last entirely, from the brilliant stylistic insights of his early work. He remains a kind of hero for his refusal to subordinate his fascination with the actual world to a cold modern formalism. But balancing the claims of art and life requires the mental agility of, say, Matisse, who was also, among other things, a *metteur en scène* of intimate situations. Vuillard, after his early years, lost his nerve. Perhaps the Roussel-Marie comedy had rattled him. Or maybe he didn't want to upset his mother. ♦

REALITY THEATRE

The Wooster Group rewrites Chekhov.

BY HILTON ALS

Could be Melikhovo, could be anywhere. The three sisters—Olga, Masha, and Irina—live with their brother, Andrei, in the provincial town where their father, a military man, was stationed, or retired, before he died, far from the family's former glory in Moscow. Here the siblings dream and dream, but none of them know where to direct their longings. Toward Moscow? Their dead father? It's all the same. Olga, a school-teacher plagued by migraines, droops with refinement like a fat rose. Masha, trapped in an unhappy marriage, is a conundrum of belief and despair. Irina, an optimist who hoped that work, useful work, would be the cure for her malaise, becomes as tired of her own philosophy as she is of the dead-end job she secures. Andrei thwarts his sisters' hopes of rescue by failing to get a professorship in Moscow, and settles instead for a job as a provincial bureaucrat, which falls more in line with the petty ambitions of his wife, Natalya. The siblings have been in this town for eleven years, and nothing has changed. Moscow looms. Flowers bloom. Then it's autumn again, another winter, and still nothing happens. The heart breaks with hope and boredom.

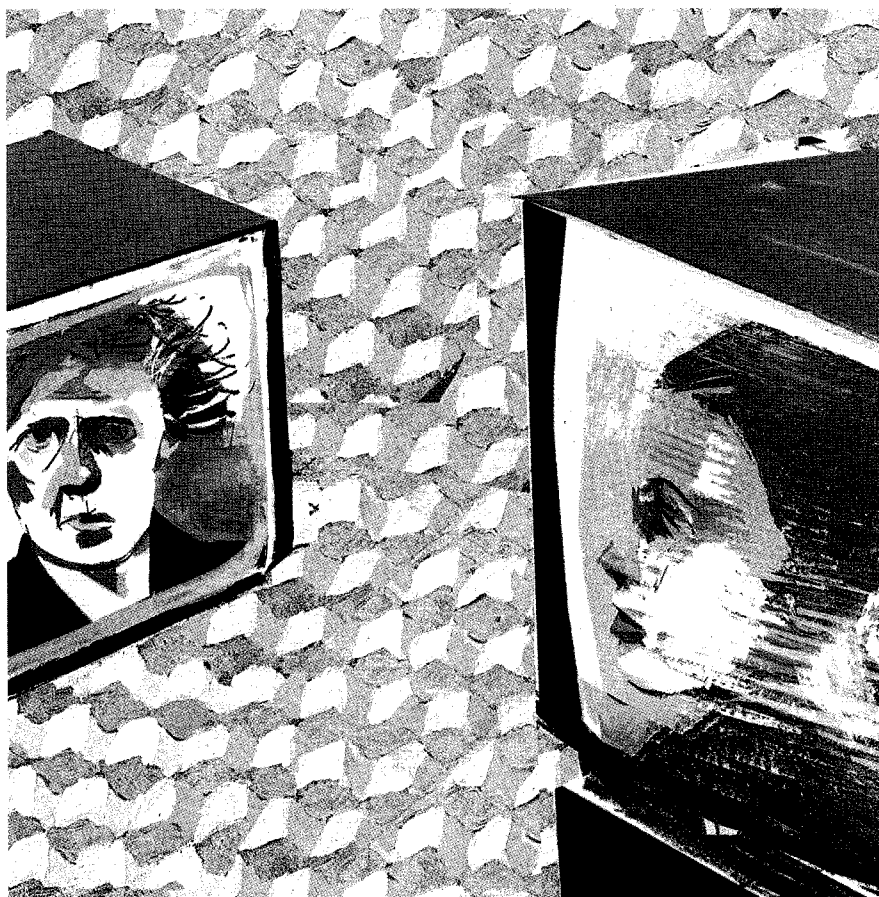
As a drama, "Three Sisters" has little by way of the beginning-middle-and-end arc that Aristotle drew in the Athenian sand. Chekhov, dipping into the waters of the Volga, washed that line away with a temerity that one doesn't normally associate with so "sweet" a writer. "In Russia, no less than in our country, possibly even more than in our country, Chekhov attracts a kind of sickening piety," Janet Malcolm observed in her 2001 study "Reading Chekhov." "You utter the name 'Chekhov' and people arrange their features as if a baby deer had come into the room." But to eliminate the piety entirely is to lose sight of what makes that graceful deer a deer: its unimpeachable naturalness, or what Malcolm calls the "benevolent deception" of

realism, which Chekhov rendered with such brilliance.

Chekhov began his career as a playwright in vaudeville, a genre that didn't require the tedious business of connecting characters' thoughts to actions and to events in the externalized world of a play—a task that later frustrated him. ("Ah, why have I written plays and not

by the late Paul Schmidt—who played the Doctor in the first staging of the show, in 1991, at the Performing Garage, on Wooster Street, where the company has been headquartered for three decades now.

But to approach "Brace Up!" with Chekhov's famous psychological vantage point in mind does a disservice to the Wooster Group. The company's director, Elizabeth LeCompte, was one of its co-founders in 1974, and her ideas about theatre were influenced by those of such leading avant-gardists as Robert Wilson and Richard Foreman, who stressed the *thing* itself, the belief that the event of gathering to watch a show was part of the show. What differentiated LeCompte from her predecessors (including Richard Schechner, with whom she apprenticed)



Talking heads: Peyton Smith and Anna Köhler in "Brace Up! (2003)."

stories!" he complained to his publisher in 1896.) But his ideas about the forces that drive theatre were radical, and they form a perfect launching pad for the radicalism of the Wooster Group's exceptional reimagining of "Three Sisters." Titled "Brace Up! (2003)," the work (now at St. Ann's Warehouse, in Brooklyn) is based on a delicate translation of the play

was her way of juxtaposing "found texts" with the experiences of the performers—as they did the hula, recounted their acid trips, and so on. LeCompte worked with existing material (Thornton Wilder's "Our Town," Arthur Miller's "The Crucible"), but in much the same manner that a d.j. plays two records simultaneously—as one element that contributes

RICCARDO VECCHIO

to a larger effect. In "Brace Up!," the actors recite the lines of Chekhov's play, but they use them as they would a prop, something that supports the action but wouldn't really be missed if it were mislaid. No one "acts," but the performers have enormous reserves of technique—you can't break the rules without knowing them. Using technology (the actors speak less to one another than they do to the microphones and video cameras on-stage) and comic absurdity (they deliver their speeches with a kind of sidelong wink and never reach the end of the play), they push "Three Sisters" into the realm of performance as performance, something quite separate from the conventional realist theatre's goal of representing life as it is. "Brace Up!" is about a real event in life—but that event is the one you are watching onstage.

Still, the wit behind the company's deconstruction of "Three Sisters" wouldn't hit home if there were no heart. As Natalya, the social-climbing rube who tries to break through the sisters' stifling decorum, Anna Köhler (rejoining the company after an absence of nine years) provides the show with its emotional center. She makes us see how Natalya, by marrying Andrei, has fallen into a trap—the trap of his family's snobbery. The sisters' cruelty—"A green belt, darling, that just isn't done," Olga says when Natalya first visits—breaks our hearts only because Köhler's Natalya feels it. The sisters make fun of her, like girls in the schoolyard, but it's Natalya, with her doll's face and womanly figure, who comes alive. In general, though, individual performances stand out far less than those of the group as a whole (which, for this show, is made up of eight men and five women). Seven of the actors in this production appeared in the 1991 staging, and the spectres of past Wooster Group performances are as palpable as Chekhov's well-ordered lives. Even Paul Schmidt makes an unexpected appearance in the current show—on videotape. He is introduced by Kate Valk, who plays Masha and the Narrator; in the latter role, she not only marks the passage of time but also reads the stage directions, announces the lighting cues, and oversees the action, which takes place on a large metal stage.

The Wooster Group, by directing its irony at traditional productions of Chekhov, preempts any attempt at piety. In

Jim Clayburgh's set, four bright light boxes jut upward from the floor. Video monitors sit like bug eyes on the stage, projecting live views of the actors' heads, along with scenes from Japanese horror movies: Godzilla roars; cute little girls sing, unaware of impending danger; buildings crumble; and the three sisters chatter and chatter, locked in their world of semi-privilege and muted disaster. The family's loyal retainer, Anfisa, is played, on video—most of the time, you see only the bottom half of her face—by the actor Steve Buscemi's late grandmother, Josephine. Light cues are missed. Music blares too loudly and is then abruptly shut off. Andrei (Ari Fliakos) acts disgruntled as he munches a cracker, a parody of an intellectual who stomps too hard across the stage. Every so often, the actors break the "action" of the play to make martial-arts moves with bamboo poles or perform a stylized Japanese-flavored dance—all coy facial expressions and hand movements. The costumes are a grad student's vision of Japanese folk theatre—reminiscent of the clothes by Rei Kawakubo, of Comme des Garçons—and the Western actors look ridiculously oversized in such fragile garb. Masha's lover, the macho Colonel Vershinin (Willem Dafoe), wears a jacket with the back rolled up like a window shade. As Olga, the excellent Peyton Smith, with her white skin, red lips, and almost invisible eyebrows, has the face of a whacked-out Kabuki star, unable to keep track of her own thoughts. But before we can figure out the relevance of Japanese imagery to the play—is that country's famous reticence somehow linked to the sisters' Russian concepts of modesty and class?—the "benevolent deception" of realism is further upset by Beatrice Roth's portrayal of Irina, the youngest sister, as a woman with silver-gray hair who spends time in a wheelchair.

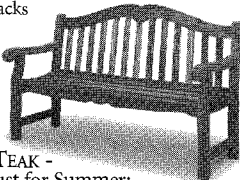
This is theatre as play. It is also theatre as memory. Despite the continuous stimulation, technological and otherwise, the company's aesthetic leaves enough holes for the viewers to bring their own reflections to the piece. There is Köhler as Natalya, but the image is superimposed on the memory of her building her craft at the Red Bar, in the East Village, which no longer exists. That, in turn, is superimposed on the thought of the late Ron Vawter, the brilliant Vershinin of the 1991 production, who, like Köhler, made Chekhov's illusion movingly real. ♦

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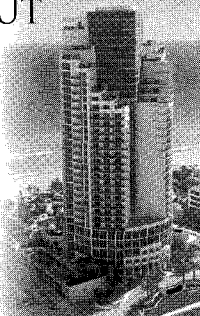
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THE CURRENT CINEMA

CULTURE SHOCKS

"Laurel Canyon" and "Irreversible."

BY ANTHONY LANE

Among its other accomplishments, "Laurel Canyon" is to be congratulated for addressing the ever-topical question of whether, why, and, above all, where you should have sex with your mother-in-law-to-be. The answers, in case you're interested, are as follows: "Why not?," "Why not?," and "In an outdoor pool as warm and steamy as soup." Better still, the movie asks the question not of a man but of a woman. Alex (Kate Beckinsale) is a research scientist who wears spectacles and makes love to her fiancé, Sam (Christian Bale), with her T-shirt bunched primly over her bosom. Alex is, in brief, a little Miss, and it is the business of this film, written and directed by Lisa Cholodenko, to turn her into a hottie. No such hope for Sam, a medical resident, who manages to look even more battened-down than his beloved. He gets a position at a psychiatric hospital in Los Angeles, and the couple flies from the East Coast to the West, where Sam's mother, Jane (Frances McDormand)—a record producer, bereft of bra, husband, and hang-ups—rules over her jungly lair. She Tarzan, she Jane.

This is a plum of a part, and McDormand gorges herself. For one thing, she gets to toy with young flesh, and, from where I was sitting, the delight that dawned on her face as the buttons were slowly popped on her denim shirt looked dangerously close to unfeigned. Jane has a fresh squeeze, the unembarrassable Ian (Alessandro Nivola), to whom she boasts, "I'm sixteen years older than you. That's a lifetime of fucking." Ian is the lead singer in a rackety British band, which infests Jane's place like a family of gibbons while struggling to cut a new track in the adjoining studio. Alex, at

work upstairs, is lured away from her laptop by these grungy sirens, and she winds up in the clutches of Ian and Jane. The result threw me into a spin: how on earth is a critic meant to take notes on a semi-incestuous intergenerational threesome? Forget pen and paper. I needed a geometry set.

Sam, not to be outdone, gets a ride every morning from one of his fellow-medics, the delectable Sara (Natascha McElhone). The two of them draw close, and the scene where they sit in the car and swap verbal yearnings is at once the dirtiest, the least graphic, and the most touching thing in the movie, all the more so because these Ferrari-like desires are being mooted in the front seat of a Volvo. The sequence stays with you because it shows a pair of essentially shy creatures fighting to unfurl, and Cholodenko choreographs it to a tee, right down to the slam of the car door and the smack of Sam's hand (half farewell, half slap of frustration) on the window.

The setup of "Laurel Canyon" is prime sitcom material, yet the movie comes across as a comedy made by someone who is, if not humorless, at least unsure how funny she should be. That tentative strain creeps into the casting; Nivola is an American playing a Brit, whereas Bale and Beckinsale are doing the opposite, and the crossover thickens the air of displacement—nobody here is quite where he or she belongs. Bale gets stronger and stranger with every movie; he used to look like a man who was hiding something, and now he looks like a man who is hiding everything, and who can't decide whether to be amused or appalled by his burden. He even makes a credible doc-

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tor, which is a rare condition in movie actors, and the one thing that I cannot forgive Cholodenko is her tendency to cut away from a subplot involving Sam's patient—a tricky, abusive youth named Wyatt (Rick Gonzalez)—whenever it turns promising, in order to whip us back to sex, drugs, and what I hesitate to call rock and roll.

By the rules of Hollywood, of course, the squares always lose. From the early moment on the plane, when Sam and Alex play Scrabble together (sample words: "queasy," "sweat"), we can tell that they will be denied dramatic justice, and that Jane—America Unplugged—will carry the day, her cultural triumph as assured as that of the music she espouses. "Anybody with instincts knows about popular music. That's why it's popular," she tells Alex. "Either it pulls you in or it leaves you cold." At the risk of perversity, I would like to put in a word for the cold. "Laurel Canyon" functions best not as liberationist whoopee but when it allows the cautious, too, to have their say—not during the impending orgy but in the beautiful series of morning-after closeups, which survey the expressions of these fretful souls. Alex, Sam, and even Jane lie awake, wide-eyed at the sins they did or did not commit the night before; only Ian slumbers, a naughty baby, replete with immorality. I like to think that he is already dreaming of the compliment that Alex will pay him at the end. "You helped to open me up," she says. What was she before? A cardboard box?

Beware films bearing shocks. The fuss that precedes them is often in directly inverse reputation to their subsequent activity at the box office. The newspaper columnists who frothed at the mouth over David Cronenberg's "Crash" only just outnumbered the viewers who actually sat through his gridlock of automated lovers. One wonders how a wary public will cope with Gaspard Noé's "Irreversible," which lands here with a reputation not far short of murderous. At Cannes last year, it was met with catcalls, walkouts, vomitings, and all the other responses that the inhabitants of the Côte d'Azur normally reserve for an inferior platter of *fruits de mer*.

Whether the picture deserves its bad buzz matters less than the genuine buzz

that we hear on its soundtrack, together with a flurry of moans, grunts, and a kind of heavy techno-shove. Even if you closed your eyes—a tempting option—you would still know that you were in the hollering presence of pain. The story is undiluted dread: Alex (Monica Bellucci) and her boyfriend, Marcus (Vincent Cassel), go to a party

lem is Noé's choice of markers along the way, specifically the killing and the rape. The first is filmed so violently that—thank heavens—you can hardly grasp what's happening, while the second is shot with an uninterrupted, shudderless, ground-level camera that gives us nowhere else to look. I can see the reason for this without finding any ex-



Frances McDormand plays a record producer with a square son.

in Paris with Pierre (Albert Dupontel), her amicable ex. After a tiff, Alex leaves early and walks through an underpass, where she is waylaid, raped, and battered. The two men pursue the rapist, track him to a gay night club, and exact revenge. What Noé does with this stuff is to run it backward, dragging us from hell to heaven; he starts with the red pulsing light of the club and rewinds to a green and pleasant afternoon, in which the inviolate Alex lies reading on the grass and goes to bed with her adoring mate. The structural turnaround makes it impossible for us to share their innocent pleasure, and, at the party, forces us to read sexual threat into even the lightest of flirtings. The movie's title insists not merely on the standard law of tragedy—what's done cannot be undone—but on the even grimmer thought that what's done undoes any good that has been done before.

That strikes me as a serious addition to one of the bleakest of French intellectual strains: the misanthropy so scornful of hope that, as in Céline's "Journey to the End of the Night," it fuels its own momentum of dismay. The prob-

cuse for it; Noé may be accusing other directors of flinching from the terror of such an assault, but his version shows why they are entitled, or obliged, to turn aside.

The twist is that men have reportedly complained about Noé's work more than women have; if there is one thing worse than imagining yourself to be a victim, it is to be told that, as a man, you store away natural hatreds that could ally you with the perpetrator. I would like to think that "Irreversible" is anti-inflammatory, but, having sat through it in an ordinary theatre, I fear I may be wrong. I am thinking in particular of three men, two elderly, one middle-aged, who walked out quietly after the nine-minute rape. I heard no mutterings of disgust, or calls for their money back; indeed, it could be that these gentlemen got exactly what they paid for. One of them arrived in a suit a couple of minutes before the scene began, as if he had seen it previously and checked the precise timing. He stood throughout, then left immediately, once Monica Bellucci had had the beauty beaten out of her. I guess he had to get back to the office. ♦

THE BACK PAGE BY BRUCE MCCALL

NEW C.I.A. PHOTOS SHOW MORE NORTH KOREAN MISCHIEF

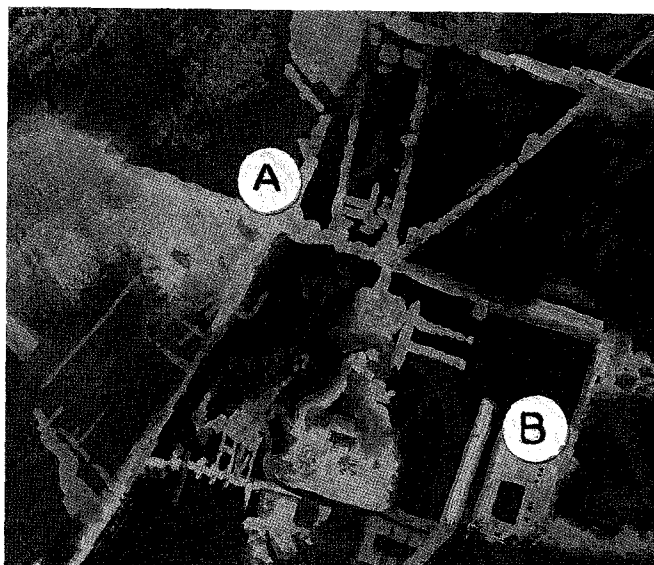


Photo reveals the recently completed printing plant (A) near the northern port city of Chongjin, where counterfeit tickets to this year's Academy Awards ceremony are being produced in a crash program. Area marked B is believed to be a factory turning out fake Oscar statuettes. The combined effect could be total panic among Hollywood celebrities, agents, and Barbara Walters.



This twenty-million-square-foot Hyangsan factory (arrow) is due to begin production of unopenable CD packages, utilizing a hammer-, razor-, and knife-proof design that North Korean engineers have been secretly developing since 1987, and against which Western consumers have so far had no credible defense.



A gloomy picture: carefully dispersed across the countryside near the industrial center of Nampo, this mother plant and its satellites are gearing up to begin manufacturing "perpetual" light bulbs that actually burn out in mere hours—making a mockery of the lauded Bulbs for Bran Flakes trade pact with Canada inked just last year.



The complex of racetracks pictured in this C.I.A. satellite snapshot confirms long-standing U.S. fears of a North Korean program to produce a greyhound "superbreed" of 100-m.p.h.-plus mutts capable of annihilating American dog racing as we know it. In magnified versions of this photo, dogs are running so fast they appear only as blurs.



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